

GOD AND MAN IN THE KORAN

SEMANTICS OF THE KORANIC WELTANSCHAUUNG

STUDIES IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

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VOLUME V

GOD AND MAN IN THE KORAN

SEMANTICS OF THE KORANIC WELTANSCHAUUNG

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THE KEIO INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL
AND LINGUISTIC STUDIES

Tokyo

1964

First published 1964
by the Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies,
Keio University, Minatoku, Tokyo, Japan

Printed by Toppan Printing Co., Tokyo

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PREFACE

The present work is based on a course of lectures which I gave at the Institute of Islamic Studies in McGill University, Montreal, in the spring of 1962 and 1963 at the request of Dr. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, then Director of the Institute. I wish at the outset to express my cordial thanks to him for giving me the opportunity and encouragement to put into coherent form the results of many years of work on both the problems of semantical methodology and those of the Koranic Weltanschauung viewed from the standpoint of semantics.

The lectures are not reproduced here as originally delivered. I expanded them considerably and arranged the matter in a different order. In so doing I was guided by a hope that, although so many competent scholars had already studied the Koran from many different angles, I might still be able to contribute something new to a better understanding of the Koranic message to its own age and to us.

It remains to express my gratitude to all those who helped in various ways to make the production of this book possible: first, to the Rockefeller Foundation, the Humanities Division, under whose kind and cordial auspices I could undertake an extended two years' study tour of the Muslim world (1959-1961); secondly, to all those who attended my seminars at the Institute in Canada and contributed toward making me clarify my thought by their lively questions and valuable comments; and last but not least, to Professor Nobuhiro Matsumoto, to whose guidance and unfailing sympathy this work owes much more than I can express.

My colleague Mr. Takao Suzuki, read through the manuscript and made a number of valuable suggestions. He helped me also with the proof-reading.

It is also my pleasant duty to acknowledge my great obligation to Dr. Shohei Takamura, President of Keio University for the subsidy generously granted by the University (Fukuzawa Endowment for the Advancement of Learning and Study) toward the publication of this book.

T. Izutsu

Tokyo, Sept., 1963

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CHAPTER I

SEMANTICS AND THE KORAN

I SEMANTICS OF THE KORAN

This book which is actually entitled "God and Man in the Koran" might as well have been entitled in a more general way "Semantics of the Koran". I would have done so readily if it were not for the fact that the main part of the present study is almost exclusively concerned with the problem of the personal relation between God and man in the Koranic world-view and is centered round this specific topic. The alternative title would have the advantage of showing from the very beginning the two particular points of emphasis which characterize this study as a whole: semantics on the one hand and the Koran on the other.

In fact, both are equally important for the particular purpose of the present study; if we should neglect either of the two, the whole work would immediately lose its significance. For what is of vital importance here is neither the one nor the other considered separately, but this very combination itself. The combination suggests that we are going to approach a particular aspect of the Koran from a no less particular point of view. And, we must remember, the Koran is capable of being approached from a number of different points of view such as theological, philosophical, sociological, grammatical, exegetical, etc., and the Koran presents a number of divergent but equally important aspects. So it is quite essential that we should try to have at the very outset the clearest possible idea as to the relevance of semantic methodology to Koranic studies, and to see whether there is any real advantage in approaching the Scripture of Islam from this particular angle.

The title "Semantics of the Koran" would suggest, to begin with, that the work will consist primarily in our applying the method of semantical or conceptual analysis to material furnished by the Koranic vocabulary. Again this would suggest that of the two points of emphasis to which reference has just

been made, semantics represents the methodological aspect of our work, and the Koran its material side. Both are, as I have said, of equal importance. But practically, that is, for the purposes of the present study, the former aspect is probably more important than the latter, for this book is addressed first and foremost to those readers who have already a good general knowledge of Islam and are, therefore, ready to get vitally interested from the beginning in the conceptual problems raised by this kind of study regarding the Koran itself, while nothing has been assumed on their part in regard to specialist knowledge of semantics and its methodology. So I am going to put in the first part of this book less emphasis on the material side than on the methodological aspect of our problem in order to bring home to Islamists the interest and value of having a new outlook on old problems.

Unfortunately, what is called semantics to-day is so bewilderingly complicated. It is extremely difficult, if not absolutely impossible, for an outsider even to get a general idea of what it is like.¹ This is largely due to the fact that 'semantics', as its very etymology would suggest, is a science concerned with the phenomenon of Meaning in the widest sense of the word, so wide, indeed, that almost anything that may be considered to have any meaning at all is fully entitled to constitute an object of semantics. And, in fact, 'meaning' in this sense is furnishing to-day with important problems thinkers and scholars working in most diverse fields of specialized study such as linguistics proper, sociology, anthropology, psychology, neurology, physiology, biology, analytic philosophy, symbolic logic, mathematics and, more recently, electronic engineering, and still others. So much so that 'semantics', as the study of Meaning, cannot but be a new type of philosophy based on an entirely new conception of being and existence and extending over many different and widely divergent branches of traditional science, which, however, are as yet far from having achieved the ideal of a perfect integration.

Under these conditions it is but natural also that there should be in what is called semantics an all too obvious lack of harmony and uniformity. In other words, we have as yet no neatly organized uniform science of semantics; all we have in our hands is a number of different theories of Meaning. With a

1) For a well-balanced broad survey of the entire field covered by semantics together with a convenient brief presentation of the historical background the reader is referred to Prof. Stephen Ullmann's work: *Semantics—an Introduction to the Science of Meaning*, Oxford, 1962.

measure of exaggeration we might describe the situation by saying that everybody who speaks of semantics tends—rightly, we should think—to consider himself entitled to define and understand the word as he likes. This being the case, my first task in writing this book will have to consist in making an attempt to clarify my own conception of semantics, and to state as exactly as possible what I think should be the major concern of a semanticist, his ultimate aim and, in particular, his basic attitude along with an explanation of the methodological principles that derive from all this. This I will try to do in the following, not *in abstracto*, but in connection with some of the most concrete and profound problems raised by the language of the Koran.

As will be made abundantly clear as we proceed, semantics as I understand it is an analytic study of the key-terms of a language with a view to arriving eventually at a conceptual grasp of the *Weltanschauung* or world-view of the people who use that language as a tool not only of speaking and thinking, but, more important still, of conceptualizing and interpreting the world that surrounds them. Semantics, thus understood, is a kind of *Weltanschauungslehre*, a study of the nature and structure of the world-view of a nation at this or that significant period of its history, conducted by means of a methodological analysis of the major cultural concepts the nation has produced for itself and crystallized into the key-words of its language.

It will be easy to see now that the word Koran in our phrase "Semantics of the Koran" should be understood only in the sense of the Koranic *Weltanschauung*, or Koranic world-view, i.e., the Koranic vision of the universe. The semantics of the Koran would deal mainly with the problem of how, in the view of this Scripture, the world of Being is structured, what are the major constituents of the world, and how they are related to each other. It would, in this sense, be a kind of ontology—a concrete, living and dynamic ontology, and not the kind of static systematic ontology constituted by a philosopher at an abstract level of metaphysical thinking. It would form an ontology at the concrete level of being and existence as reflected in the verses of the Koran. It will be our purpose to bring out of the Koran this type of living dynamic ontology by examining analytically and methodologically the major concepts, that is, those concepts that seem to have played a decisive role in the formation of the Koranic vision of the universe.²

2) In elaborating the idea of semantics as a kind of *Weltanschauungslehre* I am greatly indebted to Prof. Leo Weisgerber of Bonn, who, since many years, has constantly emphasized the significance of human language as an intellectual process of world-formation (*Welt-*

II INTEGRATION OF INDIVIDUAL CONCEPTS

At first sight the task would appear to be quite a simple one. All we have to do, one might think, will be to pick up out of the whole vocabulary of the Koran all the important words standing for important concepts like *Allāh*, *islām*, *nabīy* (prophet), *īmān* (belief), *kāfir* (infidel) etc., et., and examine what they mean in the Koranic context. The matter, however, is not in reality so simple, for these words or concepts are not simply there in the Koran, each standing in isolation from others, but they are closely interdependent and derive their concrete meanings precisely from the entire system of relations. In other words, they form among themselves various groups, large and small, which, again, are connected with each other in various ways, so that they constitute ultimately an organized totality, an extremely complex and complicated network of conceptual associations. And what is really important for our particular purpose is this kind of conceptual system which is at work in the Koran rather than individual concepts as such taken separately and considered in themselves apart from the general structure, or Gestalt, as we might call it, into which they have been integrated. In analyzing the individual key concepts that are found in the Koran we should never lose sight of the multiple relations which each of them bears to others in the whole system.

The supreme importance of such a conceptual network or total Gestalt underlying the world-view of the Koran will be brought home by examining even cursorily a few examples taken almost at random. We may begin by observing that none of the key-terms that play a decisive role in the formation of the Koranic world-view including the very name of God *Allāh*, was in any way a new coinage. Almost all of them had been in use in some form or other in pre-Islamic times. When the Islamic Revelation began to use these words, it was the whole system, the general context in which they were used that struck the Meccan polytheists as something quite strange, unfamiliar and, there-

gestaltung. For a brief but very impressive summary exposition of his thesis see his recent *Grundformen sprachlicher Weltgestaltung*, Köln u. Opladen, 1963. In many of the essential points his Humboldtian philosophy of language coincides perfectly with what is known to-day in the English-speaking world under the name of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. As regards this latter theory see a most lucid critical examination by Prof. Paul Henle in *Language, Thought and Culture*, Michigan, 1958, Chapter I. To all appearance, these two schools have long been developing the same type of linguistic theory on both sides of the Atlantic without being acquainted with each other.

fore, unacceptable, and not the individual words and concepts themselves.

The words themselves were in current use in the 7th. century, if not within the narrow confines of the mercantile society of Mecca, at least in some religious circle or other in Arabia; only, they belonged in different conceptual systems. Islam brought them together, combined them all into an entirely new, hitherto unknown conceptual network. And it was chiefly—I do not say exclusively, for, undoubtedly there were a number of other factors at work—this transposition of concepts, and the fundamental displacement and rearrangement of moral and religious values which ensued from it, that so radically revolutionized the Arab conception of the world and human existence. From the view-point of a semanticist who is interested in the history of ideas, it is this, and no other thing, that gave the Koranic vision of the universe so markedly characteristic a coloring.

Speaking in more general terms, it is common knowledge that words, when they are taken out of their traditionally fixed combinations and put into an entirely different and new context, tend to be profoundly affected by that very transposition. This is known as the impact of context on word-meanings. Sometimes the impact results only in subtle shifts of emphasis and slight changes of nuance and emotive evocation. But more often there occur drastic changes in the meaning structure of the words. And this holds true even when the word in question in the new system still keeps hold on the same basic meaning which it had in the old system.

Now to give some examples from the Koran. The name of *Allāh*, for instance, was not at all unknown to the pre-Islamic Arabs. This is evidenced by the fact that the name appears not only in pre-Islamic poetry and compound personal names but also in old inscriptions. At least some people or some tribes in Arabia believed in a god called *Allāh* and even seem to have gone to the extent of acknowledging Him as the creator of heaven and earth, as is easy to see from some of the Koranic verses.³ Among people of this type even the highest position seems to have been assigned to Allāh in the hierarchy of polytheism, namely in the capacity of the "Lord of the House", i.e., the Ka'bah at Mecca, the other gods being regarded as so many mediators between this supreme God and human beings. This latter conception of the divine hierarchy is most clearly reflected in the Koran. In *Sûrah al-Zûmar* (XXXIX), v. 4/3,

3) See later, Chap. IV, where the Koranic evidence concerning the pre-Islamic concept of Allāh is discussed in a more systematic way.

we hear some polytheists saying.⁴

مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ

"We only serve them (i.e. worship other gods) that they may bring us near to Allāh".

The underlying idea is that of *shafā'ah* "intercession" which plays an exceedingly important role in the history of religious thought among the Arabs and Muslims from the old pre-Islamic times down to the Middle Ages when it comes to occupy the attention of the Islamic theologians.

In much the same sense, in Sûrah *al-Aḥqāf* (XLVI), v. 27/28, the gods besides Allāh are regarded as *qurbān*, lit. means of approaching, that is, propitiation and intercession. There, in reference to those ancient cities that went to destruction as a result of their stubborn refusal to believe in Allāh, it is asked with biting sarcasm: "Why, then, did they not help those people, the gods that they had taken to themselves besides Allāh as propitiators?"

فَلَوْلَا نَصْرُهُمُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قُرْبَانًا آلِهَةً

These and many other verses show clearly that the existence of a god called Allāh and even his highest position among the divinities was known and acknowledged in Jahiliyyah, but He was, after all, but one of the gods. This age-old system of religious values was gravely endangered when it was proclaimed by the Prophet of Islām that this supreme God was not only supreme in the relative sense of the highest in the hierarchy but *absolutely* supreme, and also unique, i.e., the one and only God in existence, degrading thereby all other gods to the position of *Bāṭil* "false" as opposed to *Ḥaqq* "real", in other words, mere names without any reality, mere products of fancy and imagination. If the Arabs were to accept this new teaching, the general situation would have to suffer a complete change, and repercussions would not only make themselves felt in the relatively confined domain of religious ideas but practically all spheres of life, both social and individual, would have to be thereby affected. No wonder formidable opposition to this movement under Muhammad began to manifest itself immediately and grew around him.

It is to be noticed that this did not mean a mere change in the Arab conception of the nature of Allāh alone; it meant also a drastic and radical change of the whole conceptual system about which we talked in the preceding

4) In quoting from the Koran, I give first Flügel's numbering of the verses and then that of the standard Egyptian edition whenever there happens to be discrepancy between the two.

section. The new Islamic conception of the supreme God affected profoundly the whole structure of the vision of the universe. For the first time in the history of the Arabs, a monotheistic and theocentric system was established, a system whose center was occupied by the one and only God as the sole source of all human actions, and, indeed, of all forms of being and existence. All the existent things and values were thereby subjected to a complete rearrangement and a new allotment. The elements of the universe came, without one single exception, to be uprooted from their old soil, and transplanted into a new field; each one of them was assigned a new place, and new relationships were established between them. Concepts that had formerly been quite foreign to each other were now brought into close connections; contrariwise, concepts that had been closely related to each other in the old system came to be separated in the new one.

In the realm of the supernatural beings, the acknowledgment of the position of Allāh as the sole Lord of the whole universe deprived, as noted above, all the other so-called gods (*ālihah*) of all reality. They were now "mere names", not corresponding to any real entities existing outside of language. In the terminology of modern semantics, we should say that in this conception the term *ilāh* (pl. *ālihah*), when applied to anything other than Allah Himself is nothing but a word having connotation but no denotation.

In Sûrah *Yûsuf* (XII), v. 40, we read: "That which you worship apart from Him, is nothing but names you have named, yourselves and your fathers. God has sent down no authority⁵ touching them".

مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءُ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ . مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ

Besides the so-called gods, there were also in Jahiliyyah a few other types of supernatural beings that were worshipped, feared and venerated in varying degrees according to places and tribes: angels, demons and jinn. These were all taken up and incorporated in the new system of Islamic world-conception, but with some fundamental modifications with regard to their respective position and function in the general scheme.

Of the important category of jinn we shall have much to talk later in connection with the problem of Revelation and poetic inspiration.⁶ Here let us consider, as a typical example, the case of the angel-worship in ancient

5) i.e., evidence showing that they are real.

6) See chapter VII, section III.

Arabia. According to informations obtainable from the Hadith, there seems to have been widely practised among the Arabs in Jahiliyyah the angel-worship. The Koran itself tells us that there were many who believed and professed that the angels were the daughters of Allâh. The word *mal'ak* or *malak* meaning "angel" was well-known not only among the town dwellers who might have been easily influenced in this respect by Judaism and the Persian religious conception, but also among the pure Bedouins. The famous pre-Islamic warrior-poet 'Antarah b. Shaddâd, for example, has this verse:⁷

قَبِيَّتِكَ أَنْ فِي حَدِّ سَيْفِي * مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ حَاضِرٌ لَا يَغِيبُ

"(Ask any experienced warrior in our tribe;) he will tell you that on the edge of my sword there lives the angel of death, always present, never disappearing."

In the Arab conception, an angel was an invisible spiritual being somewhat in the nature of a god or superior jinni, worthy to be venerated and even worshipped, but with no definite place in the hierarchy of the supernatural beings. Sometimes an angel was venerated as an intercessor or mediator between a higher god and men, but often he was himself an object of cult and worship. To this conception Islam brought a profound change of far-reaching consequence for the Weltanschauung of the Arabs. With the establishment of an entirely new theocentric system, a definite place was assigned to the angels in the hierarchy of beings. Moreover, the angels themselves were classified into several categories in accordance with their functions and, thus, an angelic hierarchy was formed within the universal hierarchy of being. Some names came to assume a great importance being associated with some especially important missions to fulfil in the execution of the grand design of Divine Providence; such is, for example, the angel Gabriel (*Jibril* or *Jabril* in Arabic) as the heavenly messenger who is charged with the task of transmitting the words of Revelation to the Prophet on the earth.

More important still, the angels ceased to be themselves an object of adoration and worship; now they were but simple creatures of God, differing in no way from human beings in this respect, and they were naturally so made,

7) 'Antarah: *Diwân*, ed. 'Abd al-Ra'ûf, Cairo, p. 22. Here the poet is addressing his beloved girl 'Ablah. The concept of the angel of death plays a considerable role in the Koranic eschatology. A number of important passages (e.g. VI, 93) describe how angels will come and seize the soul at the critical moment of the death-struggle and bring it before the Supreme Judge. Besides, this concept itself was not in any way alien to the Jahili mind (cf. 'Antarah, *ibid.* p. 81, v. 13)

exactly as men were, to worship God, to be humble and obedient servants of God. In Sûrah IV, v. 170-171/172, we are told: "The Messiah will never disdain to be a servant of God, nor will those angels who are allowed to enjoy Divine favor. Whoever disdains to serve Him as a slave, being too proud (to do so), He will assemble them to Him, all together."

لَنْ يَسْتَكْبِرَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ وَلَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ . وَمَنْ يَسْتَكْبِرْ
عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْزَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا .

Thus we see the angels, without ceasing to be celestial beings belonging to a higher ontological order than mankind, degraded to the position of mere servants or slaves of Allâh in much the same way as ordinary human beings. And if this is the case with the angels how much more should this be the case with *jinn*. These have also been originally and essentially created to serve and worship Allâh; there can be no difference at all in this important respect between *jinn* and human beings. In Sûrah LI, v. 56 Allah Himself declares: "I have created *jinn* and mankind only that they might serve Me."

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

And the verse is well-known⁸ in which it is solemnly declared that those of the *jinn* who disobey Allâh and refuse to serve Him will be thrown into Hell on the Day of Judgment together with human *kuffâr* (infidels) without any discrimination.

It is to be noticed that all these are but a small part of the universal rearrangement of concepts and redistribution of values brought about by the new teaching of Islam, which radically altered the nature of the Arab conception of the world. We must observe that the words have not changed in their original basic meanings; what has actually changed is the general plan, the general system, and in this new system each one of them has found a new position. The word *mal'ak*, for example, still retains the old meaning of "angel," and yet in this new system, it is no longer what it has been; it has undergone a subtle but very profound inner semantic transformation as a result of its having been put in a new place in a new system.

The impact of a new conceptual framework on the meaning structure of individual concepts will come out much more clearly if we turn to words that stand for moral, ethical or religious values. In the nature of the case, the

⁸) Sûrah *al-Sajdah* (XXXII), v. 13.

Koran abounds in excellent examples in this field. We may mention as the most typical one the word *taqwā*. As we shall see later,⁹ the basic semantic core of the word *taqwā* was in Jahiliyyah "self-defensive attitude of a living being, animal or man, against some destructive force coming from outside". This word comes into the Islamic system of concepts carrying with it this very basic meaning. But there, under the overwhelming influence of the whole system, and particularly by the fact of its having been now put into a specific semantic field composed of a group of concepts having to do with "belief" which is peculiar to the Islamic monotheism, it comes to acquire an extremely important religious meaning: *taqwā*, passing through the intermediate stage of "the pious fear of Divine chastisement on the Day of Judgment", ends by meaning a personal "piety" pure and simple.

A great many examples may be easily adduced to illustrate the same process of semantic transformation from different angles. But it is not necessary to do so at this stage, for, after all, that precisely will be the most important subject of this whole study, and will, therefore, continue to occupy us all through the book. So instead of going any further in this direction, I should like to stop here for a while and add some general observations on what I have called the whole conceptual system or network from a somewhat more technical point of view.

III 'BASIC' MEANING AND 'RELATIONAL' MEANING

By the brief and summary explanation I have just given, the significance of a whole conceptual framework, or total Gestalt, has been, I hope, made apparent, in affecting the meaning values of individual words that exist in that totality. Concepts, we have seen, do not stand alone and in isolation but are always highly organized into a system or systems.

At this stage I should like to introduce a technical distinction between

9) See chapter IX, section II, where these and other related words are carefully analyzed from the particular standpoint of the field semantics. See also the following section, where the two important words *kufr* and *islām* will be treated as an illustration of the technical distinction between the 'basic' and the 'relational' meaning.

what I would call 'basic' meaning and 'relational' meaning, as one of the major methodological concepts of semantics, in order to facilitate our subsequent analytic work.

Now if we take up the Koran and examine from our standpoint the key-terms that we meet with therein, we notice immediately two things, one quite obvious and, apparently, even too banal and commonplace to be pointed out, and another which may not be so obvious at the first glance. The obvious side of the matter is that each individual word, taken separately, has its own basic meaning or conceptual content on which it will keep its hold even if we take the word out of its Koranic context. The word *kitāb* "book", for example, means basically the same thing whether it is found in the Koran or outside of the Koran. This word, as long as it is actually felt by the speech community to be *one* word, keeps its fundamental meaning—in this case, a very general and non-specified meaning of "book"—wherever it is found, whether it happens to be used as a key-term in a given system of concepts or more generally outside of that particular system. This constant semantic element which remains attached to the word wherever it goes and however it is used, we may call the 'basic' meaning of the word.

This, however, does not exhaust the meaning of the word. And here begins the second aspect of word-meaning to which reference has just been made. In the Koranic context, the word *kitāb* assumes an unusual importance as the sign of a very particular religious concept surrounded by a halo of sanctity. This comes from the fact that in this context the word stands in a very close relation to the concept of Divine Revelation, or rather various concepts having direct reference to Revelation. This means that the simple word *kitāb* with its simple basic meaning "book", once introduced into a particular system and given a certain definite position in it, acquires a lot of new semantic elements arising out of this particular situation, and also out of the various relations it is made to bear to other major concepts of that system. And, as happens very often, the new elements tend gravely to affect and even modify essentially the original meaning structure of the word. Thus in this case, the word *kitāb*, as soon as it is introduced into the Islamic conceptual system, is put into a close connection with such important Koranic words as *Allāh*, *wahy* "revelation", *tanzīl* "sending down (of Divine words)", *nabiy* "Prophet", *ahl* "people" (in the particular combination of *ahl al-kitāb* "the people of the Scripture" meaning peoples who possess a Book of Revelation like the Christians and the Jews, etc.) Henceforward, the word in the characteristically

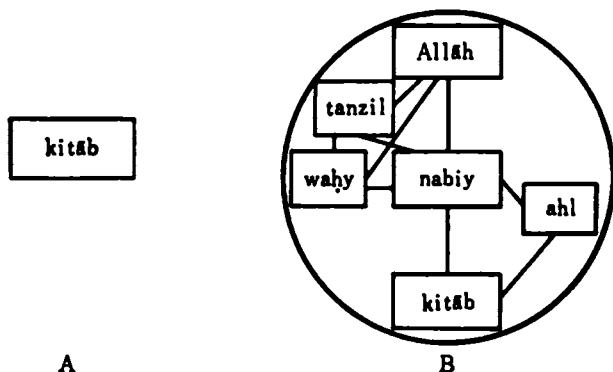
Koranic context will have to be understood in terms of all these related terms,

and this association alone gives the word *kitāb* a very special semantic coloring, that is, very complex and particular meaning structure which it would never have acquired if it remained outside of this system. It is to be noticed that this is also part of the meaning of the word *kitāb* as long as it is used in the Koranic context—an exceedingly important and essential

part of its meaning, indeed, far more important than the 'basic' meaning itself. This I would call in this book the 'relational' meaning of the word to distinguish it from the latter.

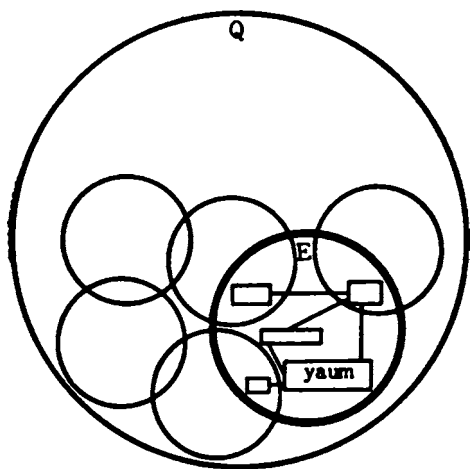
Thus, while the 'basic' meaning of a word is something inherent in the word itself, which it carries with it wherever it goes, the 'relational' meaning is something connotative that comes to be attached and added to the former by the word's having taken a particular position in a particular field, standing in diverse relations to all other important words in that system.

In view of the great methodological importance of this concept, I should like to give here another simple example showing how a 'relational' meaning comes into being. The word I have in mind is *yaum* whose 'basic' meaning is "day". Let us suppose that the big circle (Q) in the diagram represents the whole Koranic vocabulary. This Q is, as we shall see in detail presently, a large conceptual system consisting of a number of smaller overlapping conceptual systems which we call in semantics 'semantic fields'. Among them there is a 'field' which is of especial importance in determining the nature of the Koranic world-view, a field, that is, composed of words having direct reference to the Resurrection and the Last Judgment, like *qiyāmah* "resurrection", *ba'th* "raising (the dead)", *dīn* "(Last) Judgment", *ḥisāb* "reckoning", etc. This field or conceptual network constituted by these words we may call the Eschatological field (E).



A—the word *kitāb* in an ordinary context showing the basic meaning of "book" pure and simple.

B—the same word *kitāb* in the semantic field of Revelation peculiar to the Koran.



As is natural, an intense atmosphere of a very unusual nature pervades the whole field and reigns over it. Right into this atmosphere you put the word *yaum* with its proper—neutral, we might say—meaning of a “day”, which it has in normal situations; at once you see a variety of conceptual associations formed around it, and the concept of “day” tinged with a marked eschatological coloring. In short, *al-yaum* “the day” means in this particular field not an ordinary day, but the

Last Day, i.e., the Day of Judgment. Exactly the same explanation applies to the Koranic use of the word *sā‘ah*¹⁰ whose basic meaning is “hour”. In order to be understood in the sense of the “Hour of Resurrection”, the word need not actually occur in special combinations with other words that have more explicitly eschatological associations; the word *sā‘ah* by itself is quite sufficient to convey all the necessary eschatological implications if only we know that it is being used not in its basic meaning, but in a sense which is peculiar to this semantic field.

It often happens that the modifying power of the whole system works upon the word so strongly that the latter ends by almost losing its original conceptual meaning. When this happens, then we have a different word; in other words, we are witnessing the birth of a new word. The outstanding example is the semantic transformation which the verb *kafara* underwent in the Koran.

Kafara properly and basically means “to be ungrateful” “to show ingratitude” towards some good done or some favor shown by some other person; it is just the opposite of *shakara* meaning “to be thankful”. And this is the usual meaning of the verb *kafara* within the larger context of the vocabulary of the Arabic language. This meaning itself does not change in any way whether the verb be used by the Muslims or by the non-Muslim Arabs; it is

10) Sûrah XXXIII, v. 63, for example: “Men will ask you concerning the Hour (*sā‘ah*). Say: The knowledge of it is only with Allah. What can make you know it? It may be that the Hour (*sā‘ah*) is nigh.

common to all the Arabic speaking people. Moreover, this has been so all through the ages from pre-Islamic times down even to our own days.

However, the word took quite a special course within the narrower context of Islamic theology. At the Koranic stage of the development of the Arabic language, the word was taken over from the pre-Islamic vocabulary by Divine Revelation and put into an extremely important semantic field composed of words having reference to the central concept of "belief", namely, belief in God. A direct and most intimate conceptual connection was thereby established between this verb and the word Allâh. That is to say, within this narrowly confined semantic field—which we might call the *imân*-field, *imân* being roughly equivalent in meaning to "belief", as we shall see more fully later—*kafara* was no longer the simple attitude of ingratitude, but was ingratitude towards God, or more exactly, towards God's goodness and the favor shown by Him. And this is the first stage in the very interesting semantic development of this word in the Koranic context.

In order to understand the next stage we must remember the very basic fact about Islam that, according to the religious teaching of the Koran itself, one of the essential conditions, or rather, the very first step in attaining to the true "belief" or "faith" (*imân*) is that man should learn to understand the seemingly quite ordinary and common natural phenomena which he observes around him not as simple *natural* phenomena but as so many manifestations of Divine goodness towards him—that is, in Koranic terminology, as so many "signs" *âyat* of God—and be truly thankful to Him for them. The Koran never tires of insisting most emphatically and trying to bring home to man how all the good things which he is enjoying in this earthly life are in reality nothing but God's gifts. Islam as a religion is, in this respect, an exhortation to gratitude towards God. At the same time it is an exhortation addressed to man to become deeply conscious of his ultimate and essential dependence on God. In the religious view of the Koran this consciousness on the part of man of his absolute dependence on God is the very beginning of the true faith and belief in God. This explains how the verb *kafara*—or its nominal form *kufr*—deviates little by little from the original meaning of "ingratitude" and comes nearer and nearer to the meaning of "disbelief" or "unbelief" as the flat negation of the concept of *imân*. In the Koranic verses that were revealed to Muhammad towards the end of his lifetime, *kafara* was no longer the antonym of *shakara* "to be thankful" but rather the opposite of *âmana* "to believe", and its participial form *kâfir*—this form, incidentally was destined to play a part of paramount

importance in the subsequent history of Islamic thought, whether theological or political—came to mean simply an “infidel”.¹¹ Correspondingly, the word *shakara*, on its part, comes very near to the concept of *imān* itself. In not a few places in the Koran, *shakara* “to be thankful” to God is almost synonymous with *āmana* “to believe” in God, although, to be sure, the semantic transformation in this case has not been as complete as in the case of *kafara*.

In any case, here we see how word-meanings get affected by their neighbors, by the impact, that is, of the whole system to which they are made to belong. A word signifying “thankfulness” could never have conceivably acquired a meaning coming near to “belief” and “faith” except by having been put into a particular semantic field, where all elements contributed towards letting it develop in that direction. And in terms of our distinction between ‘basic’ meaning and ‘relational’ meaning, we might describe fairly adequately the situation by saying that in the case of *shakara* a markedly characteristic relational meaning developed around the basic semantic core of the word in the Koran, which enabled the word to be used sometimes almost synonymously with *āmana*, while in the case of *kafara* “to be ungrateful” the relational meaning became powerful and got the upper hand of the basic meaning so much so that it eventually produced a new word with the basic meaning of “disbelief”.

It remains now to say a word about the real nature of what I have called ‘basic’ meaning in distinction from the ‘relational’. It must be kept in mind that the ‘basic’ meaning which, as I said, a word carries with it everywhere and always as its conceptual core or kernel, and which, therefore, does not change in whatever system the word may be put, as long as it is felt by the community to be one word—this ‘basic’ meaning is in reality but a methodological concept, that is to say, a theoretic postulate which proves useful whenever we want to analyze the meaning of a word scientifically, which, however, we never find in this abstract form in the world of reality. We only assume as a working hypothesis the existence of some such thing in our semantical analysis of words because in most cases the assumption facilitates our analytic procedure and makes our understanding of word-meanings more systematic and scientifically exact. To say the truth, words are all complex social and cultural phenomena, and in the world of reality even a single word cannot be found, whose concrete

11) For more details about *kufra*, see later, chapter IX, and also my earlier work *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran*, Tokyo, 1959, where a whole chapter (IX) is devoted to a consideration of the meaning of this word in the Koranic context.

meaning is covered completely by what I call 'basic' meaning. All words without exception are more or less markedly tinged with some special coloring coming from the peculiar structure of the cultural milieu in which they actually exist.

IV VOCABULARY AND WELTANSCHAUUNG

The previous section was devoted to a consideration of a methodological distinction between two different, although closely related, sorts of word-meaning which we named provisionally 'basic' meaning and 'relational' meaning respectively. And we examined a few examples from the Koran. Our real aim was not so much to explain the distinction itself by concrete examples as to show how semantical analysis of the 'relational' side of a word-meaning requires a minute and careful investigation into the general cultural situation of the age and the people in addition to a more specialist linguistic knowledge of the word. For, after all, what we call the 'relational' meaning of a word is nothing other than a concrete manifestation, or crystallization, of the spirit of the culture, and a most faithful reflection of the general tendency, psychological and otherwise, of the people who use the word as part of their vocabulary.

This, I think, has also shown that semantical analysis is neither a simple analysis of the formal structure of a word nor a study of the original meaning attached to the word-form, i.e., etymology. Etymology, even when we are fortunate enough to know it, can only furnish us with a clue as to the 'basic' meaning of a word. And, we must remember, etymology in many cases remains a simple guess-work, and very often an insoluble mystery. Semantical analysis, in our conception, is something that intends to go far beyond that. It purports to be a cultural science, if we are to classify it. The analysis of the basic and relational elements of a key-term should be conducted in such a way that, when we really succeed in doing it, the combination of the two aspects of the word-meaning would bring to light one particular aspect, one significant facet of the culture as it was, or is, being experienced consciously by those belonging to that culture. And at the end, if we ever reach that final stage, all the analysis

done must help us reconstruct on an analytic level the whole structure of the culture as it really lived—or lives, as the case may be—in the conception of the people. This is what I would call the ‘semantic Weltanschauung’ of a culture.

It remains now to elucidate more in detail what kind of a thing this ‘semantic Weltanschauung’ is, how it is basically constituted, and what grounds we can offer for maintaining that it forms philosophically a dynamic ontology to which a passing reference has earlier been made.

With this in view let us begin by repeating what we have already remarked, namely, that the words in a language form a closely-knit system. The main pattern of that system is determined by a certain number of particularly important words. It is necessary to note here that not all words in a vocabulary are of equal value in forming the basic structure of the ontological conception underlying the vocabulary, however important they may appear from other points of view. The word “stone”, for example, may be fairly important in the daily life of the English-speaking people. But the word, it would seem, does not play any decisive part in characterizing the world-view of the present-day English language. In the same way, the word *qirtās* meaning “parchment” which occurs in the Sûrah *al-An‘am*¹² is indeed, a very interesting and remarkable word not only linguistically but also from the standpoint of the cultural history of the Arabs, but it does not contribute in any essential way towards characterizing the nature of the fundamental Koranic vision of the universe. The word *shā‘ir* “poet” is several degrees more important than this, particularly in a negative sense, because the Koran is emphatic in pointing out to the opponents that the Prophet Muhammad is “not a poet”.¹³ And yet, its importance, when compared with the word *nabiy* “prophet” itself, is very small.

Those words that play a really decisive role in making up the basic conceptual structure of the Koranic world-view, I would call the ‘key-terms’ of the Koran. *Allāh*, *islām*, *īmān* “faith”, *kāfir* “infidel”, *nabiy* “prophet”, *rasūl* “apostle (of God)” are some of the outstanding examples. It will be the most important, but also the most difficult, part of a semanticist’s job, who would study the Koran from this point of view, to isolate, before everything else, the key-terms out of the bulk of Koranic vocabulary. For it will determine all the subsequent analytic work he will be doing; this will doubtless form the very

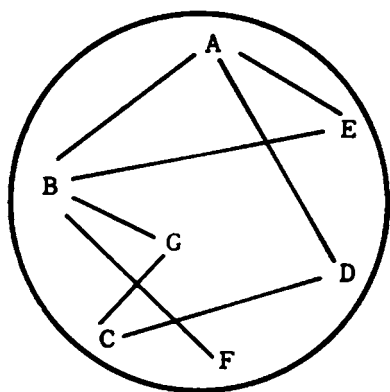
12) VI, v. 91, where reference is made to the Jews who jealously keep their sacred Book of Moses having “put it into parchments”.

13) cf., for instance, LII, 30.

basis of the whole edifice.

Almost unavoidably a certain amount of arbitrariness comes into his choice of the key-terms, and this may gravely affect at least some aspect of the whole picture. Just to give one example: the Koran mentions more than ten times the Heavenly "Throne" '*arsh* of Allah,¹⁴ and we know that this concept occupies a very prominent place in the discussions of later theologians of Islam and that it plays also an exceedingly important role in Islamic mysticism as a symbol. But whether the concept is so fundamentally important already at the Koranic stage as to be fully entitled to be regarded as one of the key-terms will certainly be a question open to discussion. And the semanticist will have to be confronted with many similar cases in the course of his analysis. This, however, does not offer a real problem, for as regards, at least, the main body of key-terms there can possibly be no essential disagreement. Nobody will question the choice of words like *islām imān*, *kufr*, *nabiy*, etc., not to speak of the word *Allāh* itself.

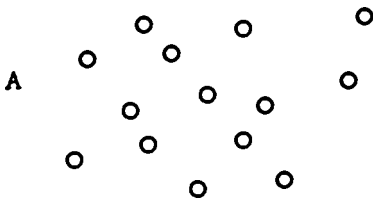
Now the key-terms constitute among themselves the general pattern of the vocabulary of which they are the representative members. And this they do by standing in diverse and multiple relations with each other. As I said earlier, they do not exist quite independently of each other; they are connected with one another in a most intricate way and in diverse directions.. Let A, B, C, D, E, F and G be the key-terms of a vocabulary. The word A with its own 'basic' meaning is closely related with B, D and E, for example. The word B, in its turn, itself having its proper 'basic' meaning has an intimate relationship with E, F, G besides



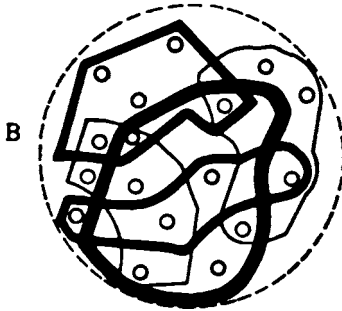
14) For example, in XXVII, v. 26, we read: اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ "Allah! There is no god but He, the Lord of the great Throne", and in XX, v. 4/5: الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ مُشْتَوٍ "The Compassionate One sits upon the Throne". The importance of the concept of "Throne" may be seen from the favorite Koranic expression used in describing Allah ذُو الْعَرْشِ "The Possessor of the Throne" (XVII, v. 44/42; LXXXV, v. 15)

A, and the word G with C and B, etc., etc.. So that all, taken as a whole, present themselves to our eyes as a highly organized system of interdependent elements, a network of semantic associations. And finally, all the words of the vocabulary are distributed along these main lines.

Thus we see that 'vocabulary' in this sense is not a mere sum total of words¹⁵; that is, it is not a mere haphazard collection of a great number of words lumped together without order and principle, each one of them standing by itself without any essential connection with others (Picture A.) On the contrary,



the words exist connected with each other in multiple relationships and thus form a number of largely overlapping areas or sectors (Picture B). These areas or sectors constituted by the various relations of words among themselves we may call 'semantic fields'.



Each semantic field represents a relatively independent conceptual sphere which is quite similar in nature to vocabulary. The difference between 'vocabulary' and 'semantic field' is obviously a relative one; essentially there can be no difference at all between them. For, after all, a 'semantic field' is no less an organized whole than 'vocabulary', because it is a whole body of words arranged in a meaningful pattern repre-

senting a system of concepts ordered and structured in accordance with a principle of conceptual organization. Vocabulary usually comprises a number of spheres, that is to say, vocabulary as a larger conceptual field is divided up into several particular fields. But each of the particular fields, as an organized sector of the vocabulary, is itself fully entitled to be called a 'vocabulary' if it is large enough to be treated as an independent unit. Only when we consider it as a particular part of a larger whole, do we distinguish it from the latter calling it a 'semantic field'. The latter, in this sense, is a system within a system, that is, a sub-system.

15) The common image of vocabulary as a dictionary where words are neatly arranged in an alphabetical order is out of question here.

Theoretically it would, then, be possible to consider even the Koranic vocabulary itself a particular 'field' within a still larger whole, the vocabulary of the Arabic language of that age. If we leave out of consideration—which, however, we should not do, practically—the tremendous cultural importance of the vocabulary of the Koran in the history of Arabic, and adopt a strictly formal point of view, then the Koranic vocabulary is but a sub-system within a system. In any case, this seems to give us warning against ignoring the basic relationship it bears to other significant sections within the whole vocabulary of the Arabic language. Fortunately for us, something at least of these other sectors is known to us, chiefly through the language of pre-Islamic and *Mukhadram*¹⁶ poetry, which has come down to us thanks to the painstaking efforts of the great philologists of the Abbasid period. The pre-Islamic poets—and partly also the *Mukhadram* poets—share with the Koran a considerable amount of key-words, but their vocabulary and the underlying world-view are structured along essentially different lines from those of the Koran.

In these two major conceptual systems of old Arabia—the pre-Islamic and the Koranic—even the common elements belong as a rule in entirely different spheres of thought. And this simply means that one and the same word usually assumes a completely different semantic value according as it belongs in this system or that. And since, chronologically, the vocabulary of pre-Islamic poetry is antecedent to that of the Koran, a comparison between them will certainly be quite fruitful. It will, we might expect, cast an illuminating light on the original 'basic' meaning of some of the key-terms that are found in the Koran. It will further allow us to see exactly how new ideas arose and how old ideas were modified in Arabia in the critical period extending from the late Jahiliyyah age to the first Islamic age, and observe how history acted upon and moulded the thought and life of the people. This is the main reason why in the following I shall constantly be referring to pre-Islamic poetry in explaining the semantic structure of the Koranic vocabulary.¹⁷

16) A technical term for designating those who lived the earlier half of their lives in Jahiliyyah, and the second half in Islam; in short, the contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad.

17) We may also go a step further in this direction and try to follow from this particular point of view the Islamic culture in the ages of its progressive movement and creative development. The semantics of the Koran, once established, will supply a good and truly necessary preliminary to a fruitful study of all other semantic systems that arose after the Koranic period: theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, mysticism, grammar and rhetoric, to mention only the most important ones. This, of course, lies far beyond the scope of

The above considerations have, I hope, made it sufficiently clear that vocabulary, far from being a single homogeneous plain, consists of a great number—or rather we should say, an indefinite number—of strata of associative connections or spheres of conceptual association, each one of which corresponds to a predominant interest of a community in a given period of history and thus epitomizes some aspect of its ideals, aspirations and preoccupations. Vocabulary, in short, is a multi-strata structure. And these strata are formed, linguistically, by groups of key-words, which we have named 'semantic fields'.

Our next task will be to investigate how individual 'semantic fields' are themselves structured in detail, and how it will be possible for us to detect one in the midst of an extremely complicated whole of interlocking elements. Thus, to come back to our main topic in this chapter, which is nothing other than the semantics of the Koran, we shall have to begin by trying to isolate the major conceptual spheres of the Koran, then we shall be engaged in discovering how these various spheres or semantic fields, large and small, are delimited by their neighbors, how they are related with one another, how they are internally structured, and how they are organized and integrated into the largest multi-strata system, i.e., that of the whole Koran, besides paying due attention to the particular structure of the meaning of each individual key-word.

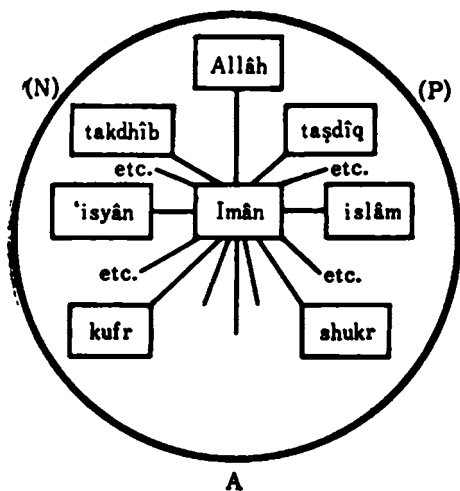
At this point I must introduce another technical term—'focus-word'—corresponding to a new methodological concept which will prove very useful when we are engaged in isolating and analyzing semantic fields. By 'focus-word' I would mean a particularly important key-word which indicates and delimits a relatively independent and distinctive conceptual sphere, i.e. 'semantic field' in our terminology, within the larger whole of vocabulary. A focus-word is, thus, an *arché* in the Aristotelian sense; it is that in terms of which a particular sub-system of key-words is set off and distinguished from the rest. It is the conceptual center of an important semantic sector of vocabulary comprising a certain number of key-words.

Since all key-words are, by definition, important terms, it will be difficult for us to decide definitely as to which, of all the possible candidates for it, should be taken as the real 'focus' of the system. And here again we must admit the possibility of an element of arbitrariness coming into our choice. But this must not be allowed to make us blind to the methodological utility of such the present study. But I will try to give at least some idea of this interesting problem in the next chapter.

a concept. Besides, the situation is made less embarrassing by the fact that the concept of 'focus-word' is, and must necessarily be, a fairly flexible one. If a certain word is made to act as a focus-word in a certain semantic field, that does not prevent the same word from behaving as an ordinary key-word in some other field or fields. And this reflects faithfully the real nature of vocabulary, which, as I said above, is always and everywhere a multi-strata structure. This I will show now, in a preliminary way, by one or two simple examples.

The word *imân* "belief"—with all the other words derived directly from the same root, like *âmana* "to believe", *mu'min* "believer"—for instance, plays in the Koran an exceedingly important part. Nobody will disagree to our regarding it as a focus-word governing a special field of its own. And as soon as we take it as a focus-word, we begin to see a certain number of other important words, that is, key-words, clustering about it as the conceptual nucleus or focal point, thus forming together a significant conceptual sphere within

the whole vocabulary of the Koran (Picture A.). These key-words clustering about *imân* are of either a positive (P) or a negative (N) nature. On the positive side, we have among others, words like *shukr* "thankfulness" (the verb *shakara*¹⁸), *islâm* lit. "the giving over of one's self (to God)" (the verb *aslama*), *taşdiq* "considering (the revealed words) truthful" (the verb *şaddaqa*), *Allâh* (as the object of "belief"), etc., while the negative side of this conceptual network consists of words like *kufr* "disbelief", *takdhîb* "giving the lie to (the revealed words)" (the verb



A

kadhhaba; *kadhîb* "a lie"), *işyân* "disobedience", and *nifâq* "making a false show of belief" etc.

Thus a group of important words, i.e., key-words, center around a word which represents and unifies the whole group, and constitute in this way a relatively independent field of concepts. If the word standing at the center

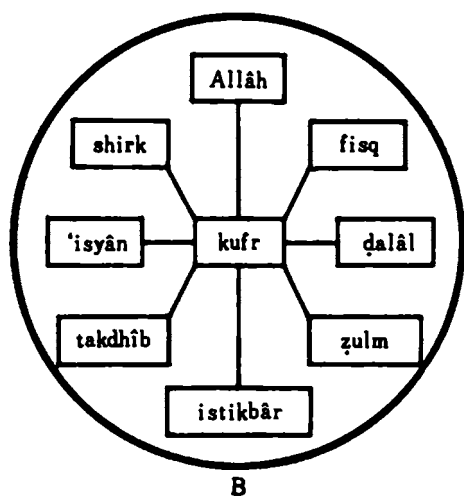
18) As regards the close connection between this and *imân*, see above, p. 23. *Kufr* (the verb *kafara*) has also been discussed there cursorily. As to the word *nifâq*, see my *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran*, p. 168 ff.

delimits the field in the gross and gives the main concept without any differentiation, the words centering around it point each in its own way, to this or that particular aspect of the main concept; they behave as the principle of differentiation, while the focus-word works as the principle of unification. And the whole field constitutes by itself a small vocabulary within the larger vocabulary of the Koran, that is, a sub-system of concepts falling within a larger conceptual system. And this latter consists of a number of similarly structured sub-systems coexisting with each other.

This, however, does not yet give a true picture of the complex nature of the whole system. The complexity of the matter arises from the fact that each of the words appearing in a sub-system, whether focus-word or key-word, does not remain confined within the limits of the particular field, but normally has a multiple relationship to many other words that properly belong to other fields. The focus-word of a certain field may appear as one of the ordinary key-terms in another field; contrariwise, a word that belongs in a certain sphere in the capacity of a key-term may appear in another as its focus-word. Again, some words may be there that are common to two or more fields all in the capacity of simple key-words.

Thus, to give the most remarkable example, the word *Allāh* appears in the semantic field of "belief" which I have just mentioned, as a key-word along with others centering around the focus-word *īmān*, because it is, in this particular connection, the grammatical object of *īmān—āmana bi-Allāh* "to believe in God" being one of the standing expressions in the Koran. The reverse side, I mean, the conceptual side of this is that God is here being taken account of in so far as He is the object of faith. There are, however, several other points of view, from which the word *Allāh* must admittedly be looked upon as an important focus-word that gathers around itself quite a number of key-words including *īmān* itself. To say the truth, the word *Allāh* is the highest focus-word in the Koranic vocabulary, reigning over the entire domain. And this is nothing but the semantic aspect of what we generally mean by saying that the world of the Koran is essentially theocentric. We shall have occasion to come back to this point later.

Of the remaining key-words that appear in the same field, *islām* undoubtedly is fully entitled to be considered a focus-word with its own semantic field. Likewise, the word *kufr* on the negative side. The rest, that is, words like *shukr*, *taṣḍīq* and *takdhīb*, cannot possibly be given such a central position in any conceptual system in the Koran.



The semantic field of *kufr* "disbelief" may be shown by this diagram (Picture B.) The diagram has been intentionally simplified by the elimination of all the negative elements, that is, those words which constitute the positive side of the diagram showing the semantic field of *imān* (Picture A). All the key-words that surround the focus-word in this diagram are either those that signify partial and particular aspects of the concept itself of *kufr* or those that stand for concepts closely related to *kufr* in the Koranic context.¹⁹

As has been suggested above, the complexity of the whole system is greatly increased by the fact that, as a rule, one and the same key-word belongs, as a key-word, in several different fields, forming in diverse spheres diverse semantic relations. Take for example the word *ḍalāl* in the semantic fields of *kufr*. *Ḍalāl* properly means "going astray" or "wandering off the right path", the verb being *ḍalla*. It is part of the most remarkable religious conception of the Koran that Allāh shows to the mankind the "right way" to salvation but only some of them take that way and many go astray. In terms of the semantic field we are discussing now, *kufr* "disbelief" in God is precisely the necessary result of man's having chosen—or having been made to choose, as the case may be²⁰—a wrong way instead of the only right one. In other terms, "disbelief" and "wandering from the right path" refer to exactly the same thing from two different angles. And it is in this capacity that the word *ḍalāl* has its proper place in the semantic field of *kufr*. But the point of interest is that this is not the only proper place assigned to the word *ḍalāl* in the whole system of the Koranic vocabulary, as we shall see presently.

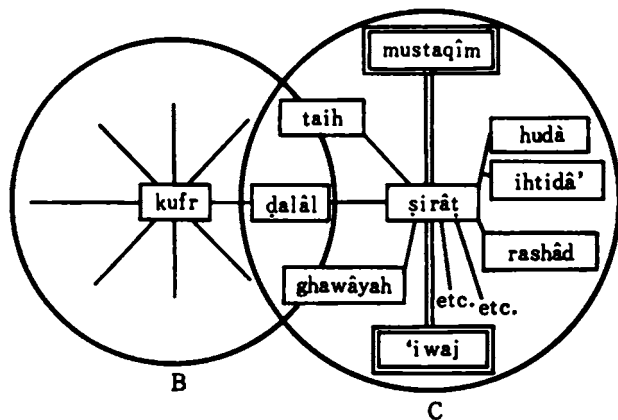
The concept of Way, *ṣirāt* or *sabil*, plays a most prominent part in forming the religious conception peculiar to the Koran. Even a casual reader will notice

19) For a detailed analysis of all these words, see *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran*, p. 113 ff.

20) The Koranic text suggests these two alternative views regarding this problem, a fact which causes later in Islamic theology the famous aporia of Divine predestination and human free will. See later, chap. VI, section II.

that the Koran from beginning to end is saturated with this idea. Most obviously *ṣirāt* or its synonym *sabīl* is the focus-word governing a whole semantic field composed of a big family of words, each one of which represents in its own way and from its peculiar point of view an essential facet of the Koranic thought. The key-words of this field may conveniently be classified under three major groups. (1) In the first place come those words standing for concepts that relate to the nature of the Way itself. The Koran looks at this problem from the point of view of its being straight (*mustaqīm*, *sawwī*, etc.) or crooked (*'iwaj*, *mu'wajj*, etc.). (2) Concepts relating to man's choosing, or being guided to, the right way (*hudā*, *ihtidā'*, *rashād*, etc.). (3) Concepts of wandering off the right way (*ḍalāl*, *ghawāyah*, *taih*, etc.). The diagram C gives, in a

very simplified form, the structural framework in which various concepts relating to the central concept of Way are put together, showing in gross outlines how they are associated with each other in smaller groups which, again, are associated with each other in a positive or negative way, and finally integrated into the large semantic field of Way.



There is here something more important to remark. If we compare the diagram C with the diagram B—that of the semantic field of *kufr*—we will notice immediately that the word *ḍalāl* “swerving from the right path” is common to both systems. In other terms, the same word belongs in exactly the same capacity of a key-term in two different conceptual systems. As a key-term, it fulfils the same basic function in both B and C, but the concrete role it plays varies widely according as it is regarded as a member of one or the other system. *Ḍalāl* as a key-word of *kufr* appears in quite a different light from the same word functioning as a key-word of the field of *ṣirāt*, because its associations are different in each case. And yet, on the other hand, it is also true that the word *ḍalāl* does establish a connecting link between the two systems. Thus we see two major semantic fields of the Koran connected with

each other in an extremely subtle but intimate way, without losing their relative independence. Here, of course, I am intentionally simplifying the matter to the extreme degree, knowing that in many cases methodological oversimplification brings out better the fundamental structure of things. In reality, *qalâl* is not the only point of contact between B and C; there must be discoverable many other such points. But the essential thing about our present problem is to see that a key-word may appear in several semantic fields at the same time in the capacity of a key-word, playing a different part in each one of them and yet functioning as a connecting link between them.

This, in addition to the fact noted above that the focus-word of a semantic field may, and does often, make its appearance as an ordinary key-word in one or more other semantic fields, will give us a clear insight into the complexity of what is called 'vocabulary'. Vocabulary as the sum total of all the semantic fields will then be seen as a vast and intricate network of multiple relationships that hold between the words, corresponding to an organized whole of concepts related with each other in a myriad of associative interconnections. Such an organized whole of concepts symbolized by the vocabulary of the community, a total conceptual system, I would call 'Weltanschauung'—or, to distinguish it from other types of world-view obtainable by other methods, e.g. philosophical Weltanschauung—'*semantic* Weltanschauung'.

It will have been observed that I have in what precedes always used the two terms 'conceptual system' and 'vocabulary' rather indiscriminately. This is due to the fact that the two, in my view, are but two different aspects of one and the same thing, that is, the linguistic is simply the other side of the conceptual. A 'concept', however it may be defined,²¹ is in itself but an extremely elusive woolly thing, hard to grasp and always with a blurred outline. It begins to exist as an independent entity with a more or less fixed contour and stability only when it comes to be couched in a linguistic form, i.e., a word. All concepts recognized and acknowledged as such in a given society in a given period of history tend, as a rule, to be linguistically fixed and stabilized sooner or later and be thus given a tangible and relatively permanent form. Only then do they become entitled to be considered social entities in

21) In this book, as I did in my earlier one to which reference was made in the course of this chapter, I understand the word 'concept' in the scientific sense in which it is used by the authors of the outstanding work, *A Study of Thinking*, New York, 1956, J. S. Brunner, J. J. Goodnow and G. A. Austin. The book contains in the form of an appendix a no less important paper on *Language and Categories* by Roger Brown.

the real sense of the word, common openly to all those who belong to the community. Theoretically, I do not in any way deny the possibility of the existence of 'pre-linguistic' concepts, but if they do exist, they lie outside the limits of our scientific interest. Anyhow whenever I use the term 'concept' in this book I understand one having a definite word at its back. The same is true of the whole organized body of concepts, of which we have been talking. One and the same complex network of associations is, in its linguistic aspect, a 'vocabulary', and, in its conceptual aspect, a 'Weltanschauung'. And it is in this and only in this sense that we shall be interested, in the following, in the problem of semantic Weltanschauung of the Koran.

It remains to say a word about the ultimate ideal which we shall have to pursue in carrying on this research. Since every system worthy of the name must have a patterning principle on which it is based, it would be natural to presume that, in our particular case too, not only each individual semantic field but the whole system of the Koranic concepts comprising within itself all the layers of associative connection is based on a pattern which is peculiar to the Koranic thought, i.e., which makes the latter essentially different from all non-Koranic systems of concepts, whether Islamic or non-Islamic.²²

To use the words of one of the outstanding pioneers of this kind of study, Edward Sapir, "there is such a thing as a basic plan, a certain cut" to each system. To isolate this fundamental plan, or as Sapir himself has named it, the "structural genius" governing the nature and working mechanism of the whole Koranic system must constitute the ultimate aim of a semanticist approaching this Scripture, as long as he understands the discipline of semantics as a cultural science. For only when we succeed in doing this, can we hope to succeed in bringing to light the Weltanschauung of the Koran, which will, philosophically, be nothing other than the very "Koranic ontology" to which we referred at the beginning of this chapter.

All this is of course a mere ideal, which, we must admit, is practically very hard to attain, or even never to be attained. The present study as a whole is but a first and very modest step towards this ultimate goal.

22) This we shall see in the next chapter. Particularly interesting will be the historical relation between the religious world-view of the Koran and that of Islamic theology.

CHAPTER II

KORANIC KEY-TERMS IN HISTORY

I SYNCHRONIC AND DIACHRONIC SEMANTICS

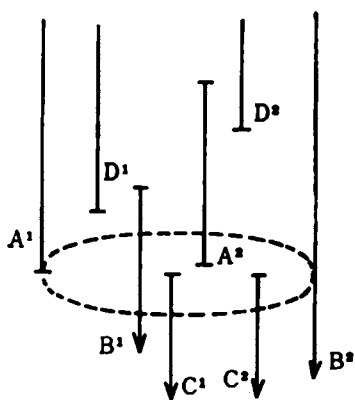
Properly speaking, most of the problems dealt with in the present chapter do not fall within the scope of this book which, as has been made abundantly clear in the previous chapter, purports to be strictly a study of the Weltanschauung of the Koran through its vocabulary. This naturally determines the extent to which our consideration will be allowed to go. Of the 'history' of the Koranic key-terms only the pre-Islamic, i.e., pre-Koranic part is necessary for our special purpose, in so far as it sheds a clear light on the formation of the 'basic' meanings of the words. The historical development of the meanings in the post-Koranic ages is not in any way a matter of direct concern to us.

If, in spite of this obvious fact, we still insist on paying attention at this point to a few at least of the significant questions raised by historical semantics regarding the vicissitudes that some of the key-terms of the Koran underwent in the course of history, it is chiefly for the following three reasons. First: since, generally speaking, an examination of a question from two or more different, but closely related, angles usually ends in a deeper and more comprehensive view of the matter, we might reasonably expect that, in our particular case too, considering the problem of 'vocabulary' anew as a historical process, will, as a continuation of the above discussion, help towards clarifying some important aspects of the theoretical problems that have not been discussed fully in the last chapter.

Secondly, by following the semantic development of some of the key-terms of the Koran in non-Koranic systems that came into existence in Islam in course of time, we may be able to throw a new side-light on the peculiarity of the meanings which those words had in the Koran itself. Lastly, a careful examination of the problem of the possibility and significance of a historical semantics will clarify, by contrast, both the advantages and limitations of the methods and principles peculiar to static semantics, and, thus, enable us to

combine in the most fruitful way the two semantics in analyzing the structure of the Koranic vocabulary.

Now to go right into the *medias res*, 'vocabulary' may be looked at from two basically different methodological standpoints. In modern linguistics these two angles or points of view are called 'diachronic' and 'synchronic', respectively. Diachrony, as its etymology would suggest, is a view of language, which as a matter of principle emphasizes the element of time in everything linguistic. Thus vocabulary is, diachronically, a bundle of words, each one of which is growing and changing independently in its own peculiar way. Some words in the group may come to a stop, that is, cease to be used in the society at a certain period (*As*); others may continue being in use for a longer time (*Bs*); again new words may make their debut on the stage at a certain definite point of time and begin their history from that period (*Cs*).



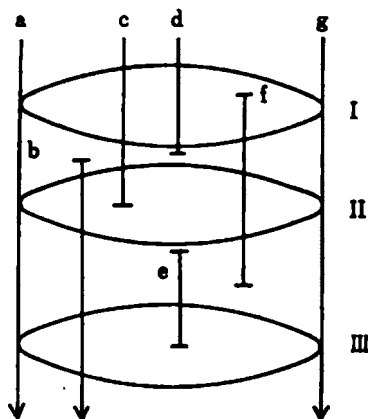
If we cut horizontally the flow of history at a certain period, a cross-section is obtained, which may be pictured as a flat surface formed by a number of words that have survived the flow of time up to that point. On this surface, as we see, *As*, *Bs* and *Cs* appear all together, regardless of whether they have a long history behind them (A^1 and B^2) or a short one (A^2 and B^1), or even none (*C*), while those that have already ceased to be active before this point (*Ds*) naturally do not participate in the composition of this surface, regardless of whether they have died out quite recently (D^1) or long ago (D^2). Such a surface

is precisely what we have meant in the preceding pages by 'vocabularly'—an organized system of words and concepts. For it is on such a surface, and on such a surface alone, that words appear to our eyes in the form of a complicated network of concepts. And the point of view which cuts across the historical lines of words and enables us in this way to obtain a static system of words, we call 'synchronic'.

We may do well to remark that vocabulary in this particular sense, i.e., a *static* surface of words is something artificial, to be very exact. It is a static state produced artificially by our stopping with one stroke the flow of history of all the words of a language at a certain point of time. The resulting cross-section gives us the impression of being static and standing still, but in reality

it only looks like so. To put it in another way, it is static only when we look at it from a macroscopic point of view. Microscopically, the surface is seething with life and movement. This latter point comes out very clearly when a language is in a critical, revolutionary period, like, for example, modern Turkish. Old elements keep dropping off, new elements keep coming in; some of the new-comers find a good place in the system, but many of them disappear quickly to be replaced by others. The whole vocabulary changes its aspect even at very short intervals. And when a language stands in such a stage of transition and transformation, it is extremely difficult to obtain a relatively stable, static surface.¹

Be this as it may, in normal cases we can obtain as many surfaces as we like by simply making such artificial horizontal cuts across the historical flow of words at several points (cross-sections I, II, III, for example, in the diagram).



And if we compare these surfaces with each other, whether the whole surfaces or only some particular sections of them, we are doing historical semantics.

Historical semantics, thus understood, does not consist in tracing the history of individual words *per se* in order to see how they change their meaning in the course of history. This latter is the typically 19th. century approach to language. Real historical semantics, as we understand it now, begins only when we study the history of words

in terms of the whole static systems to which they belong, when, in other words, we compare with one another two or more 'surfaces' which one and the same language, say Arabic, presents at different stages of its history, separated from each other by an interval of time.

The interval may be made long or short according to the purpose of our analysis. For instance, even the language of the Koran itself may be regarded as a historical process extending over some twenty years with two distinctive periods, the Meccan and the Medinan. In that case, we may quite reasonably make two horizontal cuts across the historical development of this language at these critical points, and compare the two cross-sections with each other, if our

1) This is the main reason why it is so difficult to compile a good dictionary of present-day Turkish.

aim happens to be the semantical study of the development of Islamic thought within the confines of the Koran. In fact, since Theodor Nöldeke published his epoch-making view on this matter, many important discoveries have been made regarding the 'history' of the Koranic vocabulary, which have made it clear that the language of Revelation underwent a profound change semantically after the Prophet's migration to Medina.² Or, adopting rather a long-range perspective, we may also reasonably treat the Koranic vocabulary as a whole as a static system and compare it with other systems which came into existence later in Islam, as we are actually going to do in the present chapter.

Now, as a general rule, in the case of a young and vigorously growing culture like that of the early Islam, the historical development of language shows a very marked tendency towards progressing complexity and proliferation. In our particular case, the triumph of Islam established the unshakable authority of the Koran as the Sacred Book, and the direct linguistic effect of this made itself felt in the fact that practically the whole Arabic vocabulary was brought under the sway of the Koranic vocabulary, and the Arabic language in its entirety came to be affected gravely by this fact.

In an attempt to show this in the simplest and clearest possible way, I would isolate three different semantic 'surfaces' in the early history of the Arabic vocabulary: (1) pre-Koranic, or Jāhili, (2) Koranic, and (3) post-Koranic, particularly Abbasid. At the first stage thus distinguished, i.e., the pre-Islamic, we have, roughly speaking, three different systems of words, with three different world-views underlying them: (1) a purely Bedouin vocabulary representing the oldest and most typically Arabian Weltanschauung of nomadism, (2) a mercantile vocabulary, which is naturally closely related to, and based on, the former, which, however represents quite a different spirit and world-outlook, an outcome of the recent development of the mercantile economy in Mecca, which is therefore, deeply penetrated by words and ideas peculiar to the merchants of this town,³ and (3) the Judeo-Christian vocabulary,

2) There is a certain respect in which Prof. Montgomery Watt's works, *Muhammad at Mecca*, Oxford, 1953 and *Muhammad at Medina*, Oxford, 1956, may be rightly regarded as a comprehensive study of this phenomenon. As one of the most interesting examples we may mention the very problematic word *tazakki*, which he discusses from the philological point of view in *Muhammad at Mecca* (Excursus D). He shows there how this word representing the important religious concept of "self-purification" or "being purified" falls off gradually and fades out in course of time before another more important word *islām* meaning "self-surrendering".

3) Regarding the significance of this particular vocabulary in the formation of the

a system of religious terms in use among the Jews⁴ and the Christians living in Arabia, including the more problematic Hanifitic system.⁵ These three are the major constituents of the pre-Islamic Arabic vocabulary.

The vocabulary of the Koran is, linguistically, a mixture of these three different systems. This does not mean, however, that words drawn from the three different sources exist in the Koran side by side as heterogeneous elements. The Koranic vocabulary is, as has been repeatedly emphasized in the preceding pages, a large semantic field, and as such it is an organized totality, a self-sufficient system of words into which all words, whatever their origin, have been integrated with an entirely new systematic interpretation. Take, for example, again the most important word *Allāh*. The name of *Allāh*, as we have already seen and as we shall see more in detail later, was not unknown to the pre-Islamic Arabs; it was widely known not only within the confines of the monotheistic Judeo-Christian circles, but even among the pure nomads at large. The fact, however, that the word was in use in Jahiliyyah should not make us blind to another more remarkable fact that this same word *Allāh* means something quite different in the Koran from what it meant in pre-Islamic times. And here we see the importance of the methodological concept of 'relational' meaning that has been introduced in the last chapter. The same old word *Allāh* acquires in the Koran quite a peculiar relational meaning because of its position in the organized whole.

If we compare the Koranic vocabulary with the pre-Islamic one as a whole, we notice immediately that the former has the supreme focus-word, *Allāh*, which presides not only over one particular semantic field within the vocabulary, but over the entire vocabulary comprising all the semantic fields, that is, all the smaller conceptual systems that fall under it, while the pre-Islamic system of words has no such supreme focus-word.⁶ This is one of the most fundamental differences between the two systems. And although, as we shall see, the pre-Koranic and the Koranic concepts have much in common in the meaning structure—not only as regards the 'basic' meaning but even a greater part of the 'relational' one—yet this one fundamental difference alone is enough to make

Koranic language, see, for instance, C. C. Torrey, *The Commercial-Theological Terms of the Koran*, Leiden, 1892.

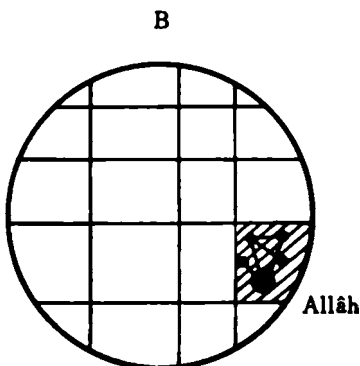
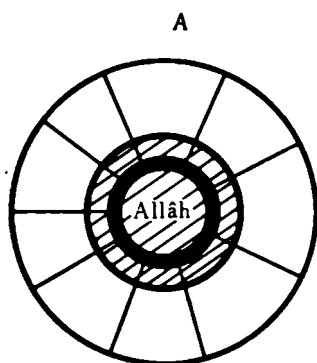
4) We must remember that Medina at that time was one of the biggest centers of Judaism.

5) As regards the Hanifs and their language, see later chapter IV, section V.

6) Except, of course, in the narrower section of the Judeo-Christian monotheistic ideas. But evidently the Jews and Christians are not in any way representative of the pre-Islamic Arabia. They are, after all, a local phenomenon, linguistically at least.

the two systems totally different in nature and structure from each other in regard to the concept of Allāh.

In the Koranic system, there is not even one single semantic field that is not directly connected with, and governed by the central concept of Allāh (Picture A).⁷ This situation it is that, as I said in the last chapter, the non-semanticists usually mean when they say that the world of the Koran is



essentially 'theo-centric'. In the pre-Islamic system Allāh is but a member of one specific semantic field (Picture B). There is a kind of conceptual coherence in the Koranic world-

view, a sense of a real system based on, and centered round the concept of God, which is not to be found in the Jahili system. For here, in this new system, all the semantic fields, and consequently all the keyterms are under the sway of this central and highest focus-word. In fact, nothing can escape from it; not only those concepts that are directly connected with religion and faith, but all moral ideas, and even concepts representing the most mundane aspects of human life, such as marriage and divorce, inheritance, commercial matters like contracts, debts, usuary, weights and measures, etc., have been brought into direct relation with the concept of God.

Moreover, in the Jahili system, the concept of Allāh stands side by side with that of *ālihah* "gods" or "divinities" with absolutely no incompatibility between them, except, of course, in the more narrowly limited and very particular field of Allāh peculiar to the pre-Islamic Jews and Christians, which is not being taken account of for the moment.⁸ There is in the Jahili system no

7) In the diagram A, the central area surrounding the word Allāh represents a semantic field consisting of words which stand for various concepts used in the Koranic description of what Allāh "does" and "is". This is what will develop later in Islamic theology into what is known under the name of 'Divine attributes' *ṣifāt Allāh*.

8) For a detailed consideration of the relation between the purely Jahili conception of Allāh and the Judeo-Christian one, and the influence which the latter might have exercised upon the former before the name of Allāh came into the Islamic system, see chapter IV, which is exclusively devoted to this very problem.

sharp contrast observable between Allāh and other *alibah* even where the former is made to stand at the top of the hierarchy of all supernatural beings. Besides, this semantic field of supernatural beings itself occupies quite a peripheral place in the whole conceptual system of Jahiliyyah in comparison with other more important fields that have more direct relevance to the tribal life of the Arabs, the sense of honor, for example, and social and individual virtues that have nothing at all to do with God and religion.

There should be no misunderstanding here. In the Koranic system, too, there is the concept of *alibah*.. We must not confuse the ontological order of things with the semantic one. In other words, the fact that the Koranic world is essentially monotheistic should not lead us into thinking erroneously that, *semantically* as well as ontologically, Allāh stands alone without any peers. On the contrary there *are* concepts of "gods" and "idols" in the Koranic system. Only, all these stand in a negative relation to Allāh; they are there simply as something the existence of which must be denied most emphatically. Speaking in more semantical terms, they are there in the Koran to be connected with the concept of "falsehood" *bātil*, while the concept of Allāh is to be connected with that of "truth" *ḥaqq*.

A further implication of the above statement is this: when we say that the name of Allāh came into the Koranic system from the pre-Islamic one, this should not be taken to mean that of all the semantic elements associated with the name, only those that were considered "good" from the Islamic point of view were accepted, while all "bad" elements were simply left behind. The fact is that all the elements, both good and bad, came into the Koranic system, and only in this new field some were accepted and some were rejected. And this process of rejection and acceptance is vividly depicted in the Koran itself. Otherwise, words like *sharik* "partner (viz. of Allāh)" and *nidd* "similar one" would never have been given a place there.

Since the Koran is, linguistically, a work of genuine Arabic, it will readily be seen that all the words used in this Scripture have a pre-Koranic or pre-Islamic background. Many of them came from the rank and file of pre-Islamic Arabic. In other terms, many of them, even those that were raised to the status of key-words in the Koran, had been in pre-Islamic times common words standing far below the level of key-words. Such was for example the word *taqwā* which we shall analyze in detail in a later context.⁹ As everybody knows,

9) See chapter IX, section II.

the word acquired in the Koran an enormous importance as one of the most typically Koranic key-terms, one of the corner-stones on which the whole edifice of the Koranic piety was based. But before that, in Jahiliyyah, it was an extremely common word that meant simply a very ordinary sort of animal behavior—self-defensive attitude with an accompanying sense of fear.

But there were also a good number of words that came into the Koran in the capacity of key-terms with an important pre-Islamic history behind them. To put it in another way, some of the Koranic key-words had already been playing in Jahiliyyah a remarkable role as key-words. Only, their semantic structure changed profoundly as they were transposed from one system to the other. As an illustration of the main thesis of this chapter, this latter case presents a more interesting—because more complicated—problem. As a matter of fact, some examples of this phenomenon have been given in the last chapter. But there they were considered in connection with problems of a somewhat different nature. Here I will give an extremely interesting example as a fore-runner, so to speak, of what will come later in abundance.

The word I have in mind is *karīm*. This word was a very important key-term in Jahiliyyah, meaning nobility of lineage—a man “of noble birth”, going back to an illustrious ancestor by an unblemished pedigree. And since, in the old Arab conception of human virtue, extravagant and unlimited generosity was the most conspicuous and concrete manifestation of a man’s nobility, *karīm* had acquired also the meaning of a man characterized by an extravagant generosity going to the degree of *our* concept of a “squanderer”.

The meaning-content of this word had to suffer a drastic change when it was put, in the Koranic context, into a close relation with *taqwā* to which a passing reference has just been made. The Koran declared with utmost clarity that “the most *karīm* (noble)” of all men was the one who took the attitude of *taqwā* towards Allāh:¹⁰

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَاهُ

“Surely the noblest of you all in the sight of Allāh is one who is characterized by the greatest *taqwā*”.

Such a combination of two words, no one would ever have dreamt of in pre-Islamic times. This old Arabic word *karīm*, epitomizing an important aspect of the Arab outlook on life, was almost forcibly—we might say—put into an entirely new sphere of the monotheistic piety of Islam. It would be no

10) Surah *al-Hujrāt* (XLIX), v. 13.

exaggeration to say that this was indeed a revolution, revolution in the history of the moral ideas of the Arabs, for nobody in ancient Arabia would ever have thought of giving a formal definition of *karam* "nobility" in terms of *taqwa* "fear of God". From now on, a man worthy to be called "noble" in the real sense of the word was not a man of noble birth belonging to a noble family and noble tribe, nor was he a man who would go on squandering impulsively and thoughtlessly all his possessions without stopping to reflect for a moment that he and his whole family might, by his acting in this way, be driven to utter misery and ruin the very next morning. But precisely this latter feature used to be considered the most distinctive mark of a "noble" man. And the ancient poets never tired of praising and extolling this virtue, for it was, together with that of bravery and valor on the battlefield, was almost the only means of preserving one's ancestral honor.

"We seek to defend our ancestral honor", a poet in the *Hamāsah* says, "with their (=our camels') meat and with their milk; for, verily, a *karim* is a man who is able to defend (viz. his honor which has been handed down to him from his illustrious ancestors.)"¹¹

نَفَائِعُ عَنْ أَحْسَانِنَا بِلُحُومِهَا * وَأَلْبَانِهَا إِنَّ الْكَرِيمَ يَنْفَعُ

This character which, as I have said, was one of the cardinal virtues in the eyes of the pre-Islamic Arabs, is, from the new Koranic point of view, not a real virtue at all. Nor is it real generosity even, because the ultimate source from which it springs is sheer vainglory and pride, the desire to make a show of generosity. Such a man is, in the language of the Koran,¹² "expends of his wealth simply for the pleasure of an ostentatious display, and not from his belief in Allah and the Last Day".

الَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِيقَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ

In another place¹³ it is clearly stated that those who squander away their possession from such a motive are but "brothers of Satan".

وَأَتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ . وَلَا تَبْذُرْهُ تَبْذِيرًا إِنَّ الْبُذْرَيْنِ
كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيْطَانِ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا .

"Give the kinsman his due, and the poor, and the wayfarer. But never

11) *Diwan al-Hamāsah (sharḥ al-Marzūqī)*, ed. Aḥamd Amin and 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn, 4 vols., Cairo, 1951, Number DCCXLVI, 2, the name of the poet unknown.

12) *Sūrah al-Baqarah* (II) v. 266/264.

13) *Sūrah al-Isrā'* or *Bamā Isrā'il* (XVII) v. 28-29/26-27.

waste in sheer waste for those who squander are brothers of Satan, and Satan is ever ungrateful to his Lord".

Here we see *karīm* which once embodied the highest Jahili ideal of reckless generosity as the direct manifestation of nobility, in the process of transforming itself into something entirely new and different through the influence of a new semantic situation. The idea of generosity itself suffers a profound change; at the same time, and in correlation with it, the word *karīm* comes to be applied to a truly pious believer who, instead of expending his wealth blindly and thoughtlessly and merely for display, never hesitates to expend it for a definite purpose which is really "noble" in the new conception, i.e., in alms, "in God's way" (*fi sabīl Allāh*¹⁴), being always careful to strike the happy medium between sheer prodigality and sheer miserliness,¹⁵ and that from the deep religious motive of *taqwā*.

Thus one and the same word makes its appearance with the same basic meaning in these two successive systems, but it is given an entirely different value and entirely different connotations according as it is used as a key-term in one or the other because of the particular associations it forms around itself in the particular sector of the system. And exactly the same thing happens between the Koranic vocabulary and the subsequent systems, albeit in a far subtler and, therefore, less obvious way. This we shall see presently.

II THE KORAN AND THE POST-KORANIC SYSTEMS

When we come down to the third stage of development as distinguished above, that is, the classical, age of Islamic culture, we meet with a proliferation of relatively independent conceptual systems. In other words, Islam produced many different systems of thought in the post-Koranic periods, theology, jurisprudence, political theory, philosophy, mysticism being among the most important of them. Each of these cultural products of Islam developed its own conceptual system, i.e., its own 'vocabulary', itself consisting of a number of sub-systems just as we have seen in the case of the Koranic vocabulary. Thus

14) See, for example, LVII, v. 57; II, v. 263-264/261-262.

15) See XVII, v. 31-32/29-30; XXV, v. 67.

we are fully entitled to speak of the vocabulary of Islamic theology, the vocabulary of Islamic jurisprudence, the vocabulary of Islamic mysticism, etc., in the exact technical sense as defined above. And the whole body of these various vocabularies constitutes the vocabulary of the Arabic language in the classical age of Islam.

In view of the tremendous and, indeed, peerless importance of the Koranic vocabulary as the very language of Divine Revelation, it is quite natural that all the post-Koranic systems were deeply influenced by it. All of them, in their linguistic aspect, were in varying degrees dependent and based on the vocabulary of the Koran. They could grow and flourish, so to speak, only on the soil that had already been prepared by the language of Revelation. Semantically this situation may adequately be described by saying that many, if not all, of the key-terms in these systems were supplied by the Koranic vocabulary. Even in the case of words that were not capable of being traced back to the Koranic source, conscious effort was often made to relate them in some way or other to this or that expression in the Koran. The authority of the Koran was so great that every system had thus to have recourse to the Koranic vocabulary for its material elements, if not directly, at least indirectly.

Besides, speaking in more general terms, the Arabic language—or, any language for that matter—however rich it may be, is not rich enough to supply each of the different systems with an entirely new and different set of words. So most of the elements used in constructing the systems must of necessity be common to them. Only, each elaborates nearly the same elements in its own peculiar way, and thereby constructs an independent network of words and concepts.

It is not necessary for our present purpose—nor is it at all possible—to consider in detail the semantic structure of these post-Koranic systems. Each would call for separate treatment. Here I must content myself with referring to only three of them—theology, philosophy and mysticism—and giving a few typical examples in each case in order to illustrate the main contention of this chapter.

Of all the conceptual systems that grow up in the classical period of Islam, theology (*kalām*) is the one that is most faithful and loyal to the Koranic vocabulary. The theological thinking begins to flourish among the Muslims partly under Greek influence but largely and mainly as a natural growth necessitated by the changed historical conditions in which Islamic civilization finds itself now. So let theology be our first object of consideration.

The very first point to notice about Islamic theology is that its material

is almost wholly Koranic. And in this particular case, we may justifiably take the word 'material' in a wider sense than strictly linguistic, for almost all the basic problems of theology owe their origin to the Koran itself, and are therefore traceable in some way or other to the Koranic thought and its verbal expressions. Islamic theology, in short, is essentially based on the teaching of the Koran. It was, after all, the result of the effort of the human intellect and reason to grasp this very teaching more systematically and theoretically. It is natural, then, that its key-terms were largely supplied by the Koranic vocabulary. Almost all the major concepts of Islamic theology were directly taken from the Koranic text, and in many cases theological terminology was but a scholastic and theoretic elaboration of the words and phrases of the Koran. Of course, the principle itself of conceptual organization was quite different in each case; otherwise there would have been no theological vocabulary as an independent system of concepts. And yet, on the whole, the vocabulary of Islamic theology may be said to have remained more faithful to the Koranic one than any other system.

Thus theology would seem to furnish a very suitable occasion for discussing in concrete terms one of our major theoretic problems. If, on the one hand, the theological vocabulary is, in a certain sense, a continuation and development of the Koranic one, and, as such, owes much of its material to the latter, and yet, on the other hand, constitutes an independent conceptual system by organizing the whole material according to its own principle of structuralization, then the difference between the two will have to be sought mainly in the 'relational' side of the key-terms. The difference, however, is in many cases extremely subtle, and difficult to grasp, particularly when exactly the same words are used in almost exactly the same contexts. The opposition of *kāfir* "infidel" and *muslim* "Muslim" offers an excellent example, as we shall see a few paragraphs later.

I would like to begin by taking up an easier case. Even the word *Allāh* itself is made to change its conceptual structure when it leaves the Koran and comes into the theological system. In theology, the central position occupied by this word remains of course the same as in the Koranic vocabulary. It is still the highest focus-word reigning over the whole system. And all the key-concepts are still under the undisputed sway of this highest concept. So, apparently, nothing has changed. And yet we observe here a profound inner transformation that has taken place just under the surface.

The structure of the concept of *Allāh* was transformed in this new system,

first and foremost, by its having been put into a direct conceptual relation to the so-called Ninety-Nine Most Beautiful Names. Of course, if we look for these 'ninety-nine names' in the Koran, we find them already adumbrated everywhere. The Koran is full of words and phrases that describe Allāh from various angles: Allāh is such and such—for example, He is *wāḥid* "One", *ghafūr* "All-forgiving", *rahīm* "Merciful" etc. etc.; and Allāh does such and such a thing—for example, He "speaks", He "creates" etc.etc. But these and the like are there in the Koran as simple descriptions that should be taken naively as they are, without sophistication.. In theology, this principle of simple and unsophisticated understanding is no longer kept intact. For the theologians, all the concepts of this kind represent so many manifestations of the very nature of God; they are, in other words, all Divine attributes, that is, inherent qualities of the Divine essence.

This means simply that the concept of Allāh has now come to be understood in terms of "essence" (*dhāt*) and "attributes" (*ṣifāt*), and this, again, means that the theologians have now assimilated the typically Greek way of thinking, which tends to interpret the whole world of being and existence in terms of "essences" and "attributes". As part of the grand scale process of the arabization of the Hellenistic heritage, so characteristic of the Abbasid period, this may have to be considered an achievement worthy of acclamation. But from the purely and strictly Koranic point of view, this marks nothing but a big step away from the original form of thought.¹⁶ We read, for example, in the Koran that God "speaks" to man, but in no way is speaking regarded there as an attribute of Allāh; there is not even a slightest suggestive hint for such an interpretation. While in theology "speech" (*kalām*) constitutes one of the most essential Divine attributes. This is not surely the Koranic approach. And the concept of God itself, when understood in this way as a transcendental "essence" opposed to its "attributes", is no longer a Koranic concept in its original form.

It is not the scholastic theology alone that caused such a radical inner transformation in the conceptual structure of the word Allāh. Other systems did the same thing, each according to its dominant mode of thinking. This point will be made thoroughly clear by a comparison of the theological vocabulary with those of mysticism and philosophy.

There are grounds for regarding Islamic mysticism, or Sūfism, also as an

¹⁶) This point has been brought out admirably well by Dr. Daud Rahbar in his book: *God of Justice*, Leiden, 1960. See particularly its introductory chapter.

continuation and development of the basic religious teaching of the Koran. Semantically this means that the mystics make use of many Koranic words as their key terms. Compared with the theologians' use of the same words, however, theirs is in most cases extremely free and even arbitrary. They tend to attach to the words they find interesting in the Koran meanings—i.e. 'relational' meanings—that are detached from the actual contexts, their guiding principle being always one of symbolic interpretation. It is quite natural that the symbolic meanings that they read into the words turn out in many cases to be of an essentially different nature and far removed from those attached to the same words by the theologians.

The mystic system affects most profoundly even the central concept of Allāh. Several remarkable points of difference occur to our mind as worthy of notice in this connection, but here it will be enough to consider briefly the most conspicuous and decisive one. In all non-mystical systems as well as in the Koran itself, Allāh, epistemologically, can only be an object of '*ilm*'. In other words God can only be known to man indirectly. Man is not allowed to approach God too closely. You cannot see God without any veil (*ḥijāb*), at least in this world.¹⁷ There can be here no intimacy, i.e., an immediate personal communion. Certainly, God reveals Himself, but He does so only through his *āyāt* "signs". And man, on his part, is allowed to know God only through the *āyāt*, that is, natural things and natural phenomena understood as so many "signs" indicative of Divine goodness, majesty and power.¹⁸ Even Moses who, in the Koran, is allowed to come closest to Divine Presence cannot look God in the face. This kind of knowledge given "from behind the veil", to use the Koranic expression, is '*ilm*'. It is an indirect sort of knowledge that can only be gained through some other things that are directly given to man.¹⁹

The mystics, in Islam as elsewhere, claim to have a knowledge of God that is essentially different from this: *ma'rifah*, that is "gnosis", a direct, immediate, and most intimate sort of personal contact, which in some form or other culminates in a personal union of the knower and the known, just as a lover

17) Theologically, this is the famous problem of 'Beatific Vision', which has been much discussed by the theologians in Islam.

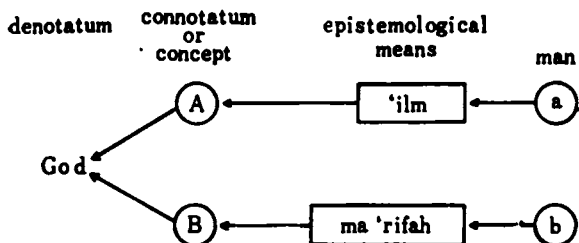
18) Hence the paramount importance attached in the Koran to the concept of *āyāt*. A passing reference to this point has already been made above, but the problem will be dealt with more systematically in a later context (chapter VI).

19) The distinction may be brought out by saying that we *know about God*, but we do not *know God*. In the terminology of Bertrand Russel, '*ilm*' is 'knowledge by inference' as opposed to and distinguished from 'knowledge by acquaintance'.

and his beloved become united in the experience of love into one person.

As is obvious, this changes everything. Not only is the conception of human nature and human psychology completely transformed, but the very concept of God must necessarily change in its semantic structure by being made an object of *ma'rifah*, while in the non-mystical systems it can only be an object of '*ilm*. Semantically we may describe this situation by saying that the 'relational' meaning of the word *Allāh* varies according as it is taken as the object of mystical *ma'rifah* or as the object of normal human '*ilm*.

Of course, as long as you are a Muslim, Allāh you believe in remains objectively always the same God of the Koran, whether you are a mystic or a theologian. But the aspect of this God, which manifests itself in your conception of Him is quite different in each case.



In the diagram here given, a man (a), an ordinary orthodox Muslim, forms for himself the concept of God through '*ilm*, while (b), a mystic, does the same through *ma'rifah*. The resulting concepts A and B, as

concepts, are essentially different from each other, although the denotatum, i.e., the objective God Himself, lying beyond these concepts is exactly the same. So essential and fundamental was this difference between the two concepts that the Islamic orthodoxy often came to the conclusion that the concept A and the concept B of God could not refer to one and the same God. And this naturally led to a very grave indictment against the mystics. For if, in reality, the denotatum itself—not the concept—of the God of the mystics was different, the latter would simply be doing nothing other than worshipping a different God from the God of Islamic Revelation. Many mystics had to face the constant danger of being accused of heresy by the intransigent orthodoxy, in spite of all the references they made to the Koran in defence of their position. In this sense the mystic exegesis of the Koran is of paramount importance and interest to a semanticist.²⁰

20) Goldziher's study, *Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*, Leiden, 1920, may be regarded as a good introduction to this problem.

When we turn from mysticism to philosophy, we find the same process of semantic transformation pushed further ahead. If, of all the post-Koranic systems, theology remained on the whole most faithful to the original Koranic usage of words and concepts, Islamic philosophy took a bold and determined step in the direction of arabizing a foreign system, and this is disclosed with particular clearness in the usage of the most important Islamic key-terms, *Allāh*, for example, *nabīy* "prophet", *wahy* "revelation", *ʿaql* "intellect", and others. The matter is complicated because it is not a simple straightforward departure from the Koranic usage of these words. The philosophers, who, Arabs or non-Arabs, used Arabic as their intellectual tool in thinking and writing, struggled, on the one hand, to build up a new vocabulary in the Arabic language, which would be capable of expressing with exactitude Greek ideas and concepts, and yet, on the other, tried to attach it to the Koranic tradition. Hence the very peculiar nature of the relational meanings that grew around the Koranic terms.

Thus the word *Allāh*, which is being the central point of our interest now, does no longer denote in philosophy simply the same thing as that living God of Creation and Revelation as He is so vividly depicted in the Koran. Among the theologians, too, the concept suffers, as we have just seen, a drastic change, and yet it is still an intellectual and theoretic elaboration of the original Koranic conception. Here, among the philosophers, the underlying image is not so much the Koranic one of God as the Aristotelian concept of the cosmic "Mover" plus that of the Plotinian "One". The philosophers do their best to show that they are just trying to bring out the deep philosophic meanings that lie hidden under the Koranic expression. They do use Koranic words and expressions in describing *Allāh*; they refer to the Koran, and they treat problems raised by the Koran. But this of course does not satisfy the pious believers, as is shown in the most outspoken way by the harsh expression which the intransigent theologian ibn Taymiyyah uses in reference to them: "a small insignificant group of the ignorant philosophers (*jubbāl al-falāsifah*).

The philosophers assert, for instance, that their "God" can be in reality no other than the God of the Koran, the Lord of Creation. But there appears on the stage a man like al-Ghazzālī²¹ who tries to tear off mercilessly the veil to

21) Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (or al-Ghazzālī), 1059-1111. His *Tabaʿūt al-Falāsifah*, known in the West as *Destructio Philosophorum* is a systematic refutation of Islamic philosophy represented by Avicenna (ibn Sīnā, 980-1037). Besides, his argumentation in this book is principally based on a conceptual analysis. And many passages of it may be adduced, as they are, even as an illustration of the analytic technique of modern semantics.

disclose the real nature—as he sees it—of the philosophical concepts. He shows, for example, how in his view Avicenna's *khalq* "creation" is but a mock-concept, i.e., a pseudo-concept of creation, which has, in reality, nothing at all to do essentially with the true Koranic concept of Divine Creation, and is even susceptible of being considered a flat negation of the latter, because it is nothing but a disguised form of the neo-Platonic concept of Emanation.

It will be obvious that the language of Islamic philosophy presents a number of extremely interesting problems to the semanticist. Some of them that appear to be directly relevant to our immediate concern will be dealt with theoretically towards the end of the present chapter. There I shall try to show by some concrete examples the truly singular make-up of the philosophical vocabulary as a conceptual system in Islam. Meanwhile I would like to go back to the vocabulary of the theologians, from which we have deviated, and discuss a few interesting cases which would illustrate my main contention on historical semantics.

I have no intention at all here to go into historical details even as regards the four or five key-terms that I am going to take up. This is evidently not a proper place for a discussion of that kind; it would belong to the semantics of Islamic theology. My intention is only to show, in connection with the immediate theoretic problem that concerns us, how in course of time there occur gradually—and almost imperceptibly, in most cases—shifts of emphasis, changes in interest and subjective approach in the understanding of one and the same word, as it moves from one system to another. What I am going to give is a broad and general outline, just the skeleton of the matter, so to speak, without flesh and blood.

With this initial understanding, we shall take up as our first example the conceptual pair formed by the words *muslim* "Muslim" and *kâfir* "infidel" which stand, as is obvious, in opposition to one another. If we trace these two Koranic key-terms back to the earlier pre-Islamic stage, we notice that originally they did not even form a pair. Both words were there certainly, but there was no essential connection between them. Moreover, neither of them had any religious connotation, *muslim* meaning "a man who hands over something precious to another who demands it of him" and *kâfir* "a man who does not show gratitude to his benefactor". It is only at the second stage of development, that is, within the Koranic system, that the two are put in opposition to one another. In other words, the Koran brings them together for the first time and puts them into one semantic field, putting *muslim* on the positive side

and *kāfir* on the negative. This semantic field is that of *īmān* "belief" which we have come across earlier.

In this new field, *kāfir* (or, to use the corresponding nominal form, *kufir*) stands opposed to *īmān* contradictorily, while *islām* (the nominal form corresponding to *muslim*) and *īmān* are complementary concepts. Most obviously, emphasis, in the Koran, is mainly and predominantly placed on the contradictory opposition of *īmān-islām* and *kufir*. And this reflects faithfully the real state of affairs in the earliest period of Islam, when the Prophet and the small number of his followers were fighting hard for the establishing of the new religion and had to wage a fierce war against those who refused to accept it. It was literally a war between *islām* and *kufir*, between "Muslims" and "Kāfirs". The situation was such that everybody had to make a decision as to whether he should choose *islām* or *kufir*.

Only in an important passage,²² *islām* is made to stand in sharp contrast to *īmān*, and the two are clearly and very consciously distinguished from each other.

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا . قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ

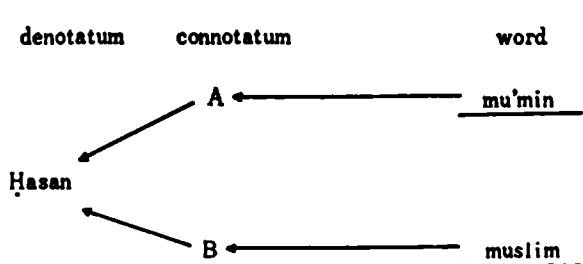
"The Bedouins say: 'We believe [*īmān*]' Tell them: 'You do not believe yet [*īmān*]' ". You should say rather, "We have surrendered²³ [*islām*], for the belief [*īmān*] (in the true sense of the word) has not yet permeated your hearts".

This is, indeed, a remarkable statement, because here we see *islām* defined in the clearest possible terms as the first step towards *īmān*, a preparatory stage at which "faith" has not yet penetrated deep into the heart. However, we must bear in mind another significant fact that this definition of *islām* was given in explicit reference to the Bedouins of the desert, whose lukewarm nature in religious matters is often referred to not only in the Koran but also in Hadith. As regards ordinary Muslims, the Koran never makes such a distinction. Far from being a superficial kind of "faith", *islām*, as a spiritual act of the complete surrendering of one's self to Divine Will, is regarded as a supreme religious value.

As a matter of fact, in normal contexts, the two words *muslim* "a man of *islām*" and *mu'min* "a man of *īmān*" are used interchangeably, both being used to denote a man who has chosen the straight way of Divine Guidance (*ḥudā*)

22) Sūrah al-Ḥujrāt (XLIX), v. 14-15.

23) Or, "We have become Muslims (formally)"



and thereby escaped from the future punishment of Hell. In more technical terms we might say that the two words have exactly the same denotatum although each of them refers to this same denotatum through a dif-

ferent connotatum. As our diagram shows, the same concrete individual, say, *Hasan*, may be referred to differently as "a man who believes in God" or "a man who surrendered himself to God". That is to say, the two words refer to two different conceptual aspects of one and the same person.²⁴

In any case, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the contrast between *imān* and *islām* was, at the Koranic stage, far less important and crucial than the sharp opposition in which these two concepts as a unit stood to *kufr*. The opposition *muslim*(-*mu'min*)-*kāfir* was one of the burning problems that confronted the nascent community of Islam.

This fundamental conceptual opposition was carried over just as it had been into the theological system that arose in the post-Koranic period. Now, from the semantical point of view, Islamic theology is, as we saw earlier, a conceptual system based essentially on the Koranic vocabulary. It inherits from the Koran a whole body of words and concepts. The opposition we are now talking about is part of this conceptual heritage. So nothing changes apparently as regards the basic pair, *muslim*-*kāfir*. However, if we examine the matter more carefully we find that there has occurred a subtle, but clearly observable, shift of emphasis and interest, a change in the fundamental outlook on the same problem. In other words, the contrast between *muslim* and *kāfir*, though outwardly the same, does no longer carry exactly the same meaning. And this is attributable to the changed cultural situation in which the Islamic community has found itself.

Islam as a religion has now long been established. Arabia as a whole embraced this religion; then, immediately following this, the islamization of the

24) The Koranic connotation of *mu'min*, according to the definition given by the Koran itself, is this: a man who has an unwavering faith (*imān*) in God and His Apostle, never conceives doubt, and is ready to stake his wealth and life for the cause of God (cf. XLIX, 15). The connotation of *muslim* is: he who has surrendered his whole being, soul and body, to God, and to God alone, absolutely (cf. II, 122/128; 125/131).

major part of the ancient world of civilizations has changed the cultural map of the world. Within this well-established system of Islam, it is naturally no longer necessary to lay so much stress on the opposition of Muslims as monotheists and *kāfir*s as polytheists. In place of this old opposition, there appears a new opposition of concepts, which begins to occupy the attention of the thinkers.

The rise of the *Khārijīyyah*, Khārijī sect, brings right into the Islamic sphere of concepts itself the basic contrast between *muslim* and *kāfir*. As far as the outward form goes, this contrast remains just the same, but its inner structure is no longer the same. For the problem does not fundamentally concern any longer the difference between the Islamic monotheist and the pagan polytheist or idolater. It concerns now a distinction within the very confines of Islamic monotheism, among the very Muslims. For, according to the view held by the Kharijites, a Muslim, once he has committed a grave sin ceases to be a *muslim*; he must be considered a *kāfir* destined for Hell, and may, therefore, even be justifiably killed. This introduces into Islam a very dangerous element, because the concept itself of the "grave sinner" is one of an extremely flexible or mobile nature in the sense that it is susceptible of being extended to any direction so that it may include anything one does not like.²⁵ Take, for example, the famous Hadith preserved by al-Tirmidhī in his *Collection of Authentic Hadith*²⁶ concerning the Koranic exegesis, which runs: "One who interprets the Koran according to his personal opinion, that is, not according to the knowledge,²⁷ has proved himself by that very fact to be a *kāfir*."

مَنْ فَسَّرَ الْقُرْآنَ بِالرَّأْيِ أَيْ بِتَغْيِيرِ عِلْمٍ فَقَدْ كَفَرَ

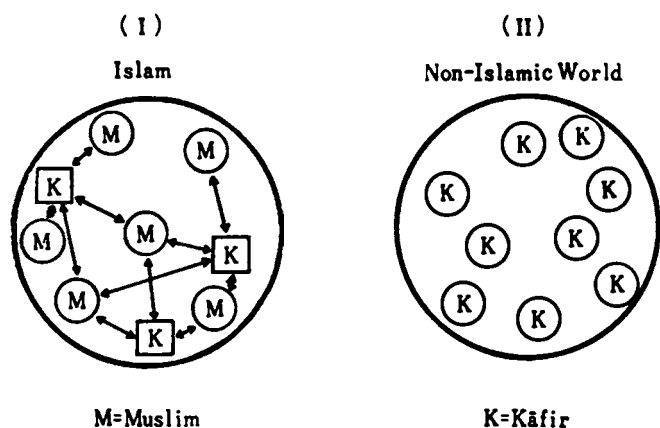
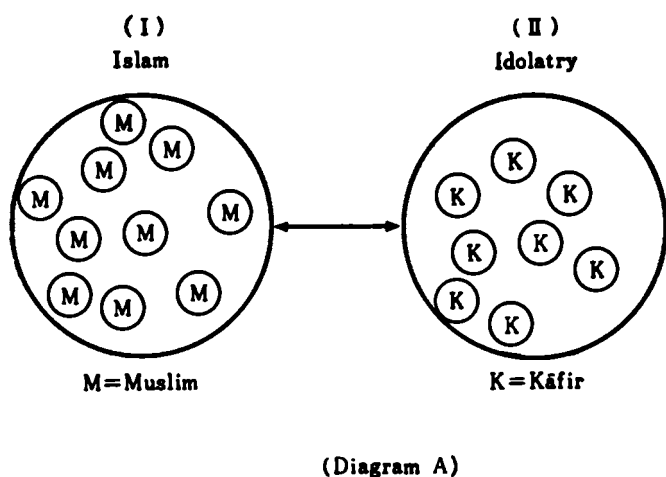
We can picture from this the gravity of the situation if we remember that this and similar bitter indictments were made freely and were even circulated in the name of the Prophet.

It is quite understandable that such a general state of affairs came to be reflected in the semantic structure of the word *kāfir*, and, consequently, of the word *muslim*. Hitherto these words had been signs of two fixed categories, and the basic contrast between them had been somewhat like this (Diagram

25) For a brief but illuminating explanation of Kharijite thinking on this problem, see Montgomery Watt, *Islam and the Integration of Society*, London, 1961, pp. 99-102.

26) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*, Cairo, 1950, II, 157. The Hadith here quoted is to all appearance spurious, but this gives a better ground for regarding it as a faithful reflection of the tendency of the age.

27) Thereby is meant the particular kind of knowledge that can be traced back by an unbroken chain of truthful transmitters to the Prophet or his immediate companions.



A): In the circle (I) which symbolizes the earlier Islamic community, every member is a Muslim. And no Muslim can conceivably be a Kâfir, as long as he believes in the unity of God and recognizes Muhammad as the Apostle of God. In the diagram B, the circle (I) still represents the Islamic community. But we perceive a remarkable change that has taken place here. Now the concept of *kâfir* has been brought right into this circle, and *muslim* and *kâfir* form a sharp conceptual contrast in the very midst of the Islamic system. Henceforth a Muslim, that is, one who believes in God and acknowledges Muhammad as the Apostle of God, may

very easily be turned into a Kâfir and publicly labeled as such merely by thinking or acting in this or that way. The concept *kâfir* has lost its denotative stability and fixedness, and become something mobile, ready to be applied even to a pious Muslim if he happens to do this or that. Thus we see that this is not a mere continuation of the Koranic contrast between *muslim* and *kâfir*, but an essentially new one, in a certain sense at least, although the two words still keep their basic meaning and a greater part of their relational meaning as well.

It is implied in the very nature of what we generally call a 'system' that,

if any important point in it happens to be changed or moved, repercussions inevitably make themselves felt in all the remaining parts of it. The changed relation just described between *muslim* and *kāfir* made it incumbent upon the Muslims to take up the concept of *muslim* itself, to examine its content more systematically and to define the word afresh in terms of the new historical and social situation in which they lived. This may be considered, as Wensinck²⁸ has said, an attempt made by the young Muslim community to define its own position, not against other communities, but, primarily, for itself. Such was indeed the compelling force of the age. Further, this must be viewed against the background of the increasing intellectual tendency among the Muslims, which was remarkably directed towards theoretic and systematic speculation, and through speculation towards more and more rigorous structuralization of Islam.

It was in accordance with this new intellectual trend that the problem of the relation between *imān* and *islām* became a matter of no small concern to the Muslim thinkers. The principal problem regarding *imān* "belief" was now how its concept was structured, not so much in contrast to *kufr*, as it had been the case at the Koranic stage, as in itself. The question, in short, was: Of what and how many conceptual elements was it composed? And the question, conceived and formulated in this way, necessitated that the answer be given also analytically. Thus the various answers that were actually given to this basic question were all strikingly 'analytic', in the sense in which modern semantics understands the word. Al-Shāfi'i's famous definition of *imān* in terms of three concepts, (1) assent by heart, (2) public verbal confession and (3) the observance of religious duties, was a clear attempt to answer this question through a conceptual analysis. Al-Ash'ari's no less famous formula is another example, which makes *imān* consist of (1) "saying" *qaul* and (2) "doing" *'amal*.

A great number of different answers were offered in the course of the development of Islamic theology by different sects and, indeed, by different individuals. The Murji'ites (*murji'ah*), for example, held that *imān* should properly be defined in terms of "knowledge"—i.e. knowledge of God, excluding thereby "doing", that is, actions, from the concept of "belief". The Karramites (*karrāmiyyah*), to take an extreme case, took the view that *imān* should be defined solely in terms of "saying", that is, verbal confession (*al-iqrār bil-lisān*). This definition led to a grave, but extremely interesting, theoretic consequence.²⁹

28) A. J. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, Cambridge, 1932, chapter III.

29) See Imām al-Ḥaramayn, al-Juwayni: *Kitāb al-Irshād*, ed. M. Yūsuf Mūsā and 'Alī

They held that a man who kept *kufr* "disbelief" secretly in his heart but professed *imân* should be considered a *mu'min* "believer" in the real sense of the word, although he was destined to live afterwards in the Fire eternally, while a man who had real *imân* in his heart but did not publicly confess it was not a *mu'min*, although he was actually going to be rewarded in the Hereafter by a life of eternity in the Garden.

Such technical discussions on the structure of the concept of *imân* raised inevitably the problem of the exact conceptual relation between *imân* and *islâm*, both of which, as we saw, had meant in the earlier period practically the same thing. And the concept of *islâm*, too, was submitted to a semantical analysis.

Here, again a number of divergent definitions were offered. But the commonest type makes *islâm* consist of what later comes to be known under the name of the Five Pillars of Islam. The first and foremost place is occupied by the *imân* itself; then come *ṣalât* "ritual prayer", *zakât* "alms-giving", *ṣaum* "the fast (of Ramaḍân)" and *ḥajj* "pilgrimage (to Mecca)". In other words, the concept of *islâm* is now understood in terms of a hierarchical combination of the concept of faith with those of the cardinal religious duties. Semantically this is tantamount to saying that the concept of *islâm* now constitutes a small but typical semantic field by itself, with *imân* as its focus-word and the remaining four words surrounding it.

As we have seen above, *islâm* in the Koranic context meant initially "self-surrendering (to God)". The corresponding verb *aslama* was inchoative; it signified that a man, by this very act of self-surrender, went into an entirely new phase of life, that something entirely new started from that moment in his life. This original connotation became very much obscured, if not completely lost, in the new conceptual system. Here we have a clear case of the shift of emphasis in the structure of word-meaning to which reference was made earlier.

This kind of semantic elaboration of concepts, with ensuing shift of emphasis and change in associative relations is observable everywhere in the Islamic thought of that age. Here I will give one more example, which is similar to,

'Abd al-Mun'im 'Abd al-Ḥamid, Cairo, 1950, p. 386. The Karramites were the followers of Muḥammad b. Karrâm—hence the name *karrâmiyyah*—in the second century of Hijrah, who upheld the principle of extreme anthropomorphism in the interpretation of the Koranic description of God. Imâm al-Ḥaramayn himself, by the way, takes the view that *imân* means nothing but *taṣḍîq*, "considering true" (viz. God and consequently, His Messenger) which is the only definition possible 'linguistically', as he says. (*ibid.* 397)

but somewhat different from, the case we have just examined. The word is '*ilm*', meaning generally "knowledge".

The basic meaning of this word, to be more exact, is one's knowing something about something—'knowledge by inference' as opposed to and distinguished from 'knowledge by acquaintance' in the terminology of Lord Russell, as we have already seen. As far as concerns this 'basic' meaning, the word stands for one and the same concept whether it is used in pre-Islamic poetry, the Koran, or theology. But its 'relational' meaning differs in an essential point from system to system. The difference comes from the conception—which varies from case to case—of the 'source' from which the knowledge is derived. In other words, what matters most in determining the real concrete semantic structure of the word '*ilm*' is the question: Where have you derived your knowledge from? It will be easy to understand this point if we remember that 'knowledge by inference' is by definition a piece of derived knowledge, that is, something induced from some given data.

In Jahiliyyah, '*ilm*' meant primarily a kind of knowledge about something, derived and induced from one's own personal experience of the matter. '*Ilm*' in this sense was opposed to *ẓann*, which meant the result of mere subjective thinking, and, as such, something groundless and, therefore, unreliable. The following verse by the famous pre-Islamic poet Ṭarafah brings out this contrast very clearly.

وَأَعْلَمُ عِلْمًا لَيْسَ بِظَنْ * إِذَا ذَلَّ مَوْلَى الرَّءْفِ فَهُوَ ذَلِيلٌ

What he wants to say is this: "I know through experience that when a near relative (or cousin) of a man has (been allowed to) fall into an humiliating situation, that would mean no other thing than that he himself has fallen into such a situation". And he emphasizes that this is his "knowledge" '*ilm*', and not a mere *ẓann*. By this he means that this is an absolutely reliable knowledge because he has derived it from his own experience, which is quite different from a piece of groundless thinking with no objective guarantee to support it.

In the Jahili conception, '*ilm*' may have its source in something different from this: tribal tradition. It is a particular kind of knowledge that has been handed down from generation to generation in the tribe, which, therefore, has the tribal authority behind it. In reality, this is not at all different in nature from the first kind. For it is nothing other than the result of innumerable pieces of personal experience by different persons that have been gradually accumulated through ages and handed down as an immaterial tribal asset. This

latter type of knowledge guaranteed by repeated experiences through untold ages goes easily beyond the limit of a tribe and tends to become what we may call a national asset of the Arabs as a whole. Such knowledge is usually formulated and propagated and handed down to posterity in the form of proverbs (*amthāl*). Hence the very great value attached to proverbs in ancient Arabia. And it was part of the important function of poets to give terse and forcible expressions to this kind of knowledge.

In conclusion, we may give a brief definition of the word *'ilm* as understood by the pre-Islamic Arabs by saying that it is a sound, well-grounded piece of knowledge guaranteed by personal or tribal experience which, therefore, can claim an objective and universal validity.

In the Koran, the word becomes a very important religious key-term. It goes without saying that here I am putting out of consideration *'ilm* as a Divine attribute, for that is another problem. We are concerned now only with *'ilm* as a human phenomenon. In the Koran *'ilm* is still used in opposition to *ẓann*, as well-grounded knowledge opposed to groundless pseudo-knowledge. So here again nothing has changed apparently.

Only, we notice that there has occurred a radical change in the conception of the ground for validity. *'ilm* is, as I have said, an absolutely reliable piece of knowledge because its validity is fully guaranteed by something objective, because it has been derived from a good source. Thus far its meaning is the same whether the word occurs in pre-Islamic poetry or the Koran. But the ground, the source from which it is derived is remarkably different in the two cases.

In the Koran, the word is placed in the new conceptual sphere of Divine Revelation and associated with other words than those it used to be associated with in Jahiliyyah; it is now knowledge derived from the Revelation of God, that is, information given by no other than God Himself; it has an absolute objective validity because it is based on the "Truth" *Ḥaqq*, the Divine *Ḥaqq* which is the only Reality in the full sense of the word. Compared with the absolute reliability of this source, all other sources are essentially and by nature unreliable. And viewed in this light, the old *'ilm*, i.e., that kind of knowledge that used to be considered sound and well-grounded in Jahiliyyah because derived from one's own personal experience must be degraded to the lower degree of *ẓann*.

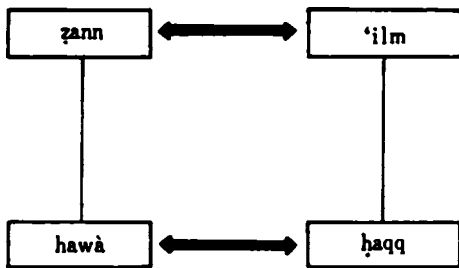
Quite a big part of what has once been regarded as well-grounded knowledge in Jahiliyyah must now be considered something essentially ground-

less: mere fancies and surmises, conjectures. A great number of Koranic verses may be adduced in illustration of this fundamental change. Here is one of them:

وَمَا لَهُمْ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ

"Of that they have no certain knowledge (*'ilm*). They are merely conjecturing (*ẓann*)."³⁰ This is said in reference to the Kâfirs who stubbornly refuse to believe in God and the Hereafter, and say emphatically that "There is nothing but our earthly life. We die, we live, and that is all!", as if they had an ultimate knowledge about human destiny. In reality, the Koran declares, what they have is not *'ilm*; it is a mere conjecture.³⁰

The Koran goes a step further and makes it clear that the ground or source



of *ẓann* is *hawā*, i.e., the natural inclination of the impulsive and perverse human soul which is by nature blind and reckless in its behavior, as is well shown by the pre-Islamic usage of the word *hawā* in the sense of the blind passion of love. *ẓann*, in this sense, is often paraphrased

in the Koran as *ittibā' al-ahwā'*³¹ meaning literally "the following of one's own personal caprices", and is, in this form, put in opposition to *'ilm*, which, in such a context, means, in short, nothing but Divine Guidance, or Revelation.

بَلِ اتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

"Nay, but those who do evil (i.e. Kâfirs) follow their own caprices, without knowledge".³² Here the expression *bi-ghayri 'ilmin* "without knowledge" must not be taken in the simple sense of "without knowing", i.e., "unintentionally". For, according to the Koran, the evildoers do what they do very consciously. The word *'ilm* carries greater weight, and *bi-ghayri 'ilmin* means "instead of having recourse to *'ilm*"—*'ilm* being understood in the sense just

30) XLV, v. 23/24. This is an extremely important passage disclosing as it does to our eyes the dark pessimistic mood which underlied the Weltanschauung of the pre-Islamic Arabs, and which drove many of them, particularly, the more reflective minds, to a notoriously riotous and dissolute life. (cf. *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran*, chapter V) This passage shows that, from the Koranic point of view, the pre-Islamic pessimism is nothing but a result of *ẓann*, and is, therefore, completely groundless.

31) *ahwā'* pl. of *hawā*.

32) XXX, v. 28/29.

explained. The contrast between *ittibā' al-abwā'* and '*ilm*' comes out still more clearly in a verse like the following:³³

وَلَّيْنِ أَتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا وَاقٍ

"If you should follow their caprices (*abwā'*), after the knowledge ('*ilm*') that has come to you, then you would have no protector against God nor any defender".

Thus there is no room for doubt that the word '*ilm*', when it is used in the capacity of a key-term in the Koran, means *the* knowledge derived from the absolutely reliable source, which is nothing other than Divine Revelation. And the same word in the well-known Koranic phrase *al-rāsikhūna fī al-'ilmi* "Those who are firmly rooted in knowledge", which designates the true believers, can be understood only in this sense.

This relational meaning which the word has acquired in the Koran is brought into Islamic theology. Here, again, the fundamental semantic structure shows no change. Only, the conception of the absolutely reliable source becomes enlarged, because now the traditions of the Prophet have established their claim to rank with the Koran as another real source of '*ilm*'. And this necessarily alters the whole balance of power in the system. Moreover, we observe here even a subtle shift of emphasis and interest. That kind of absolute knowledge based on Divine Revelation, upon whose supreme importance the Koran so emphatically insisted, is no longer a problem for debate and discussion, as it once was between Muslims and Kāfirs. In the well-established Islamic world, its importance is so self-evident to be discussed; it is something to be simply taken for granted. The attention of the Muslims is now drawn mainly towards the nature of the other source of true '*ilm*', which, although human in nature, and not divine, is, nevertheless, said to be capable of furnishing human knowledge with something like super-human validity.

Under such intellectual conditions, with the problem of the validity of Hadith occupying the attention of the thinkers, the word '*ilm*' comes to acquire the meaning of a very particular kind of knowledge that can be traced back by an unbroken and unblemished chain of authorities to the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. "On such and such an occasion the Apostle of God gave such and such an opinion on such and such a question". This is '*ilm*'. It is a kind of absolute knowledge, because its source is Prophet himself, who,

33) XIII, v. 37.

as Imâm al-Shâfi'i pointed out,³⁴ is mentioned in the Koran side by side with God in the form of "Allâh *and* His Apostle". Only those who, in making any statement, base their assertion on this absolutely reliable authority, are infallible. All others are but followers of their own personal "caprices" *ahwâ'*. And any assertion based on *hawâ'* is called *ra'y* "personal opinion", meaning an arbitrary, groundless opinion. It is to be noticed that the word *ra'y* carried in those days a far greater weight than the simple translation "opinion" would suggest, because it was directly associated by many people with downright *kufr*. It may also be interesting to notice in this connection that the orthodox school of theology often referred to heterodoxy as *ahl al-ahwâ'* lit. "people of caprices".

By this summary history of the word *'ilm* through three different stages, Jahiliyyah, Koran and theology, together, with the consideration that preceded it of the field of *imân*, *islâm* and *kufr*, I think I have illustrated how concepts undergo a gradual and subtle semantic change each time they are introduced into a new system. So much for theology.

We shall bring this chapter to an end by discussing in some detail the nature of the vocabulary of Islamic philosophy so that we might have an occasion to examine the basic problem we have been dealing with from a somewhat different point of view.

In opening this new section, will it be necessary to remind the reader that the motive from which I take up now this subject is not the desire to talk about Islamic philosophy for its own sake? My real aim is to explain by a concrete example what I have called the 'diachronic' view in semantics, i.e. a comparative examination of the various conceptual systems that arise in the course of history within the confines of one and the same language, which, in our particular case, happens to be Arabic.

Now Arabic, at the apogee of the Abbasid period, becomes an extremely rich and highly organized cultural language—indeed, one of the most important among all the cultural languages of the world. Its richness does not consist merely in the astonishing number of the words used, but, first and foremost, in the number and complexity of the conceptual associations, i.e., systems, that they form among themselves. The philosophical vocabulary is one of them.

The tremendous importance and interest which the rise and development of Islamic philosophy presents to the semanticist lies in the fact that, semantical-

³⁴) See his famous *Risâlah*, Cairo, 1940, ed. Shâkir, for instance. The entire book may be taken as a clear manifestation of such an attitude towards this problem.

ly, it was a most radical and daring attempt on the part of the outstanding philosophers to create their own vocabulary away from the linguistic authority of the Sacred Book. In fact, the vocabulary of the philosophers in Islam has one very remarkable peculiarity which, linguistically, makes it something of an essentially different nature from all other sister systems, like theology, jurisprudence, mysticism, etc., that arose in Islam in the post-Koranic period. All these were, from the linguistic point of view, invariably a natural growth and elaboration of the original genuine Arabic language, each in a particular direction. Nothing was forced upon Arabic and its natural resources from outside. Certainly, remarkable changes did occur in many places, as we have seen above. Theology, in particular, was very much influenced by Greek philosophy in the formation of its linguistic tool. But cases of this kind were, after all, sporadic and were not systematic. On the whole we might say that the growth of the post-Koranic vocabularies was a result of a spontaneous and natural process of conceptual transformation which was brought about and made necessary by the changing cultural situation. Philosophy forms the sole exception.

Only in the case of philosophy, a complete system of foreign concepts, a very particular conceptual network that had originally nothing at all to do with the Arabic language and its world-view was given from outside as the ideal model. And in order to meet the demand of this stranger, the conceptual network that had been originally existent in Arabic had to be largely disorganized and reorganized, and many new concepts that were quite alien to the Arab Weltanschauung were forcibly introduced. In short, a whole new system of concepts had to be built up on the Greek model.

Here the Muslim intellectuals learnt new concepts first and then had to look for suitable words in the Arabic language to symbolize them. But since the concepts themselves were foreign, there occurred naturally discrepancies between thought and language everywhere. Not even one single key-term of Greek philosophy found a perfect equivalent in the Arabic language, to be very exact. A similar situation had already occurred when Greek philosophy began to be transplanted in the Roman world in the Latin language. Cicero complained of the difficulty of handling Greek concepts in Latin because of the immaturity of his language, however rich it was, for an abstract philosophical thinking. But the distance between Greek and Latin was both culturally and linguistically almost minimum when compared with that between Greek and Arabic.

Thus the Arabic language, in this case, had to face suddenly the overwhelming impact of a foreign thought with a long historical process behind it, fostered in an entirely different cultural milieu, and couched in a language which was in many important respects even diametrically opposed to it. Here Arabic had to abide a most crucial test in its capacity as a cultural language. And it did stand the test.³⁵

The result was that there appeared in the Arabic language a very particular sort of vocabulary—a conceptual system on a grand scale, based on the semantic principle of what I would call ‘semi-transparency’. This I shall try to explain in the following.

Let us, to begin with, recall the very fundamental fact that Arabic is a language which, besides being astonishingly rich in basic words, shows an amazing capacity in deriving new words out of given material with a systematic regularity. This rendered it possible for the philosophers to find—not without difficulty, to be sure—almost always genuine Arabic words whose ‘basic’ meaning corresponded at least approximately to the basic meaning conveyed by the Greek philosophical terms. In such cases, all they had to do was strip the Arabic words in question of their ‘relational’ elements that had grown around the ‘basic’ meanings and replace the former, by means of definition, by the relational ones peculiar to the corresponding Greek words.

The word ‘*aql*’, to take a typical example. This word in pre-Islamic times roughly meant “practical intelligence” displayed by man in ever-changing situations. This corresponds to what is called in modern psychology the problem-solving capacity. A man with ‘*aql*’ was a man who, in whatever unexpected situation he was put, could find by himself some means of solving the problems arising from the new conditions and find a way out of the danger. Practical intelligence of this kind was greatly admired and highly estimated by the pre-Islamic Arabs. And no wonder, for otherwise it would have been

35) The problem is not only of historical interest. It is also of contemporary relevance, because present-day Arabic is again faced with a big problem of a similar nature under the impact of Western culture, namely, the pressing need of assimilating the key-concepts of the West and creating a new vocabulary out of old material, a vocabulary that will be rich enough and flexible enough to cope with the new situation of the world, and that without overstraining the natural morphological and lexicological resources of this language. In fact, all the non-Western nations are faced with the same problem. And the problem is extremely important because it is not a mere matter of language, but a matter of Weltanschauung, namely, the question of how we should articulate and interpret the world we live in. It is, in this sense, a big problem that involves grave cultural issues.

impossible to live safely in desert conditions. The famous robber-poet al-Shanfarā uses this word exactly in this sense in the following verse in which he boasts of his being naturally endowed with such practical intelligence.

لَعَمْرُكَ مَا بِالْأَرْضِ ضِيقٌ عَلَى أَمْرِي * سَرَى رَاغِبًا أَوْ رَاهِبًا وَهُوَ يَعْقِلُ

"As long as a man keeps his intelligence active (*wa-huwa ya'qilu*) there can be no embarrassing situation in which he may not know what to do (*diq*), whether he be on his way to what he desires or hastening away from something he detests".³⁶

In the Koran, this word, as a key-term, acquires a more specified religious meaning. There, in contexts of decisive importance, it is used to mean the intellectual and spiritual capacity of the human mind, which enables man to understand the "signs" (*āyāt*)³⁷ that God graciously shows to the mankind, and to grasp their deep religious implications.

Making reference, for example, to the rain which God "sends down from heaven" so that it might give life again to the earth after its temporary death, it is said:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

"Verily therein indeed are signs (*āyāt*) for people who keep their 'aql active".³⁸ (*ya'qilūna*, verbal form corresponding to the noun '*aql*').

Likewise, referring to one of the ancient Cities that were destroyed by the Divine wrath which their inhabitants incurred upon themselves by their wrongdoing:

لَقَدْ تَرَكْنَا مِنْهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

"Verily we have left out of the (City) a clear sign (*āyah*) for people who keep their 'aql active".³⁹

Here the mouldering ruins of an ancient city are interpreted as "a clear sign" of the lash of Divine wrath, a grave warning to those who refuse to believe in God. Similar examples abound in the Koran.

The same word '*aql*' comes into Islamic philosophy, again as one of its key-terms. But its semantic content, that is, the structure of the concept symbolized by the word is no longer the same, because the whole underlying world-view is entirely different, being something essentially foreign to the traditional Arab one. Whenever, we come across this word actually used in Islamic philosophy

36) *Lāmīyyah al-'Arab*, v. 4.

37) See chapter VI, section I.

38) XXX, 23/24.

39) XXIX, 34/35.

as a technical term, we are strictly required to understand it, not in terms of the original meaning which it carried before the rise of philosophy as a genuine Arabic word, whether in Jahiliyyah or in the Koran, but in terms of the Greek concept of *nous* in its Aristotelian and neo-Platonic sense. This is not in any way a natural development of the pure Arabic concept of *'aql*, but something artificial. At least initially, it was artificial.

The same old word *'aql* is still used, as if nothing changed. In reality, it has undergone a remarkable change, for the word has been made "transparent"; as it were; we are required to "see through" it, and to read the Greek word *nous* behind it. Just as in modern times we have to read behind the Arabic word *shuyû'iyyah* the European word "communism", and behind *qaumiyyah* "nationalism", so here, too, the Arabic word *'aql* must be understood in accordance with the meaning structure of the Greek word *nous*, which it has acquired in classical and hellenistic philosophy. The word has now a very particular meaning of "intellect" on a grand cosmic scale covering all the successive stages of Emanation, from the Universal Intellect which is the first emanation from the Divine essence down to the human intellect and reason.

Let it be noticed, however, that this word, as a genuine Arabic word, carries its own long history on its back, and this weighty past cannot help making itself felt, to a certain extent at least, whenever the word is used, even in philosophy. This proves a hindrance to its acquiring complete transparency. Hence the very peculiar state of semi-transparency of this kind of words. And it is characteristic of Islamic philosophy that almost all its key-terms are of this type. Semantically, Islamic philosophy is a very curious system consisting of 'semi-transparent' words.

The reason why I would call this type of word 'semi-transparent' will be made much clearer if we compare words like *qaumiyyah* "nationalism" (from *qaum* "people" or "nation") and *waq'iyyah* "positivism" (from *waq'* "putting") in modern Arabic with such words as *dimûqrâtiyyah* "democracy" and *telefûn* "telephone". The latter words are completely transparent; Western words are there palpably in the most naked form, while words like *qaumiyyah* and *waq'iyyah* mean what they mean only through the intermediacy of genuine Arabic words, each one of which has its own proper meaning and history in the Arabic language. The word *waq'iyyah*, for instance, would mean literally "positing-ism" because *waq'* means "putting" or "positing", and this much of the literal meaning functions as a semantic bridge between the two words, i.e., *waq'iyyah* and "positivism;" the point is that, through this middle term, one

should be led to the Western concept itself of "positivism" in a flash, passing over the bridge as lightly as possible.

In this respect, the contrast, again in modern Arabic, between *telefûn* and *hâtif*, both meaning "telephone", is very interesting and illuminating. One is, as we have just seen, completely 'transparent', being nothing but an arabized form of the word "telephone" itself, and the other is obviously 'semi-transparent'. 'Semi-transparent' here means that the word has its own long history behind it in the Arabic language and that this heavy history still tends to make itself felt whenever the word is used. *Hâtif* in classical Arabic means "somebody whose voice you hear but whom you do not see anywhere around". In this sense, we find the word often used in old Sufi literature in reference to some mysterious voice calling a future mystic from somewhere in heaven, urging him to renounce the worldly pleasures and turn to otherworldliness. The existence of such a weighty past naturally offers a serious obstacle to the word's becoming a simple sign of a new idea introduced from the West only recently. Compared with its rival *telefûn*, which is 'transparent' from the very outset, *hâtif* finds itself in a very difficult situation because it has to overcome the obstacle before it can become a perfect Arabic equivalent of the word "telephone".⁴⁰

The problem that concerns us next is that of the degree of semi-transparency. '*Aql*' which we have treated above is a typical example of the case in which semi-transparency was achieved in an ideal way. But in many other cases the semi-transparency was not achieved so easily. The word '*aql*' as an Arabic equivalent of the Greek *nous* did not present any serious problem to the philosophers because the basic meaning was roughly the same in both languages. Sometimes it so happened that the Muslim thinkers—or to be more exact, the first translators from Greek to Arabic—starting from a given Greek concept, did not find easily a word, within the Arabic vocabulary, with a basic meaning which would make it an appropriate equivalent of the Greek word; the concept of Being is an example in point, to take by far the most important of all.

40) As a matter of fact, the word *hâtif* has succeeded in making itself 'semi-transparent' in Syria and Lebanon, where it is currently used in daily life, but not in Egypt, for instance. As regards the more general problem of the arabization of the Western concepts in present-day Egypt, we have an extremely valuable book by Mr. Maḥmûd Taymûr, *Mu'jam al-Ḥadârah* "Lexicon of Modern Culture", Cairo, where almost all the names of things and ideas belonging to modern civilization, that have recently been introduced into the Arab world are classified and examined critically one by one.

As everybody knows Greek philosophy from its very beginning till its end was consistently and predominantly concerned with the problem of being and existence. In other words, ontology was the central preoccupation of the Greek thinkers. Consequently the concept of being occupied the most important place in their philosophical thinking. This is particularly conspicuous in Aristotle, who was admittedly the greatest teacher of the Arabs in this matter.

The Arabs, on the other hand, had traditionally shown no concern at all with such a problem particularly at such an abstract level of thinking. Certainly, even a Jahili Arab knew that things did exist, including himself, his camels, and other people around him, but he had never made the "existence" itself of such things a particular subject for reflexion. Being a matter of no concern, there was no corresponding concept, and there being no concept, there was no word to express it.

Speaking in more general terms, we may say that the Arabs as a whole were a least metaphysical people. The general and the universal did not attract their attention. Their dominant—and almost exclusive—concern was with individual, concrete things, or rather, the concrete aspects of the concrete things. The ancient Arabs seem to have taken an infinite delight in scrutinizing with a most penetrating eye details after details of the concrete things that they saw around them. Hence the astonishing richness of the Arabic vocabulary expressing all the observable aspects of all the concrete things. But they, to all appearance, were lacking in the genius of going in the opposite direction, i.e., that of going up step by step from the most concrete individual things and their concrete material aspects to general and abstract ideas tracing the logical lines of connection between individual things and abstract ideas. They were fundamentally "particularists" in this sense.

Here I cannot resist the temptation to quote a few lines from the *Fajr al-Islām* "Dawn of Islam" by the late Prof. Aḥmad Amin of Cairo.⁴¹ In chapter IV of this remarkable book, dealing with the problem of "The Intellectual Life of the Arabs in pre-Islamic Times", he writes as follows:

"The Arabs did not look at the world with a general comprehensive view, as did the Greeks, for example. The latter, when they began to philosophize, encompassed the whole world of being with a general view and put to themselves questions like the following: How did this world come into existence? The world as I see it is full of changes and alterations; is not there behind all

41) Aḥmad Amin, *Kitāb Fajr al-Islām*, Cairo, 1955, p. 41-44.

these changing things one unchangeable principle? . . . The whole world as I see it looks like something essentially one, all the parts of which are connected with each other, and which, as a whole, seems to be following some immutable laws; What, then, is this order? How and from what did it originate?

These and other similar questions the Greeks put to themselves, and that was the origin of their philosophical thinking, the very basis of which was thus a comprehensive view of the world. The Arabs, in contrast to them, did not look in this direction, and that even after the advent of Islam. They looked around themselves, and if by chance the eye caught some particularly interesting sight, they got excited and the surging emotions would find an outlet for expression in verses or proverbial sentences. . . .

As to a comprehensive view and a careful analysis of the principles and properties of the things that excited such emotions their intellect (*'aql*) found them quite foreign to itself. Moreover, even when an Arab did look at a thing, it did not usually induce in his mind a deep reflection on the object; on the contrary, he would merely stop at this or that particular aspect which aroused his interest. When, for instance, he stood in front of a tree, he would not view it in its entirety: he would only fix his sight upon some particular point of it, the straightness of its trunk, for example, the beauty of its branches, etc. Standing in front of a garden, he would not try to get an extensive view of the whole of it, nor would his mind try to have a photographic grasp of it. His mind would rather be like a bee flying from flower to flower, taking a sip from every flower.

It is this peculiarity of the Arab mind that explains both the defect and beauty that you find in Arabic literature, even in that of the later Islamic ages. . . . In short, the Greek mind, if it looks at something, looks at it as a whole, examines it, and analyzes it, while the Arab mind goes around it, and discovers there beautiful pearls of various kinds, which however are not strung together into a necklace."

As is easy to see, people of this type make first-rate lyrical poets, but are not good by nature for philosophy. This implies also that their language will be at its best in lyrical poetry, and at its worst in ratiocinative philosophy, for its vocabulary, if left to itself in its natural state, would not develop abstract concepts that are indispensable for metaphysical thinking.

The concept of Being was one of the most important abstractions that were lacking in the vocabulary of the Arabs—the abstract concept of *to eimai* which was a haunting obsession of the Greek philosophical mind. When it came into

the Islamic world, and the thinkers really felt themselves forced to look for a word in the Arabic language, that might stand appropriately for this concept, two words offered themselves.⁴²

One of them was the verb *kāna* (*kawn*). But this was far from being the exact equivalent of the Greek abstract concept of Being, for the verb meant basically "to take place" or "come to pass". There is, in other words, an important element of "becoming" in the meaning structure of this word: not pure "being" but "being" as something that is born and then goes on growing or changing in course of time: *werden* instead of *sein*, the Germans would say.

So quite naturally the word ends in Islamic philosophy by becoming rather the Arabic translation of another Greek word *genesis* which was used by Aristotle as an important technical term of his ontology, to designate the concept of "coming into being" i.e., the dynamic process of "becoming" rather than the static idea of "being" pure and simple.

Another candidate was the root *WJD*, with the basic sense of "finding". This root-meaning, particularly when taken in the passive sense "to be found" (*wujida*), comes tolerably near to the meaning of *to einai*. At least it excludes all connotation of "becoming" or "coming into being"; moreover it conveys the sense of something being there by chance: in other words, of something being there simply existent, without its being necessary to be there. This last element, which in philosophical terminology is called 'contingency' is something essential in the conceptual structure of "being" and "existence", except of course in the only one case of the "Necessary Being" (*wājib al-wujūd*).

In this way the word *wujūd* with the understanding that one should take it in the passive sense of 'being found' came gradually to be established as the Arabic equivalent of *to einai*.

However one cannot help feeling that something foreign and strange had been forced here upon the Arabic language from outside, and in fact the word *wujūd* in this philosophical sense remained for a long time outside the common Arabic usage. This we can see from the causal remarks made by al-Ghazālī in his *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*⁴³ to the effect that "it often happens to be difficult to make the word *wujūd* understood in the strictly philosophical sense so that it is necessary and desirable from time to time to use a foreign word if the philosophers want to make themselves quite clear".

42) See the most lucid exposition of this problem by Mlle. Goichon in her *Philosophie d'Avicenne*, Paris, 1951, chap. II, to which I am greatly indebted in what follows.

43) al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*, Cairo, *al-Tijariyyah*, 2nd ed. 1963, II, p. 8.

And we see also Ibn Rushd (Averroes) hesitant to use this word without reserve, for, as he says, it often misleads the readers. The passive participle of the same verb *maujūd* is used in Islamic philosophy as the Arabic equivalent of the Aristotelian *to on* (Latin *ens*): i.e. "being" in the sense of "something that exists" or an "individual substance". But, according to Ibn Rushd, many people, instead of making the Arabic word *maujūd* semantically semi-transparent and reading directly the Greek concept *to on* behind it, as they should do, make the word *maujūd* opaque, so to speak, and tend to understand it in the sense of "something found", which is, really, the basic meaning of this word in Arabic. That is why, he says, the new abstract noun *hawṭya* lit. "he-ness" or "it-ness" has been coined, from the pronoun *huwa* "he", as a more accurate equivalent for the Aristotelian subject-substance, i.e., individual substance.⁴⁴

It will have been seen from what precedes that a comprehensive and systematic re-examination of the history of Islamic philosophy from the particular point of view of semantics is something that will richly repay the effort. Such a study will not only bring to light a great many interesting points regarding the details of semantic transformation which individual concepts underwent; it will, further, contribute much towards letting semantics advance as a cultural science, i.e., as a really productive tool for research in the scientific analysis of *Weltanschauungs*. This, however, is mentioned here only as a possible future task. It is not necessary—nor is it possible at all—for present purposes to go into any more details. What I wanted to do in the last section of this chapter was simply to show, first, that there can be theoretically such a thing as 'diachronic' semantics which differs in its fundamental attitude from 'synchronic' semantics, but is, at the same time, intimately connected with the latter, and, secondly, by way of illustration, how Islamic philosophy, as a conceptual system, had to take great pains in developing its own vocabulary within the confines of Arabic vocabulary, under the immediate and overwhelming influence of an entirely foreign conceptual system.

Let us now turn to our proper subject: the problem of the structure of the Koranic *Weltanschauung*.

44) Goichon, *op. cit.* p. 78.

CHAPTER III

THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE KORANIC WELTANSCHAUUNG

I PRELIMINARY REMARK

This chapter aims at giving a bare outline of the basic structure of the Koranic Weltanschauung as a preliminary to a more detailed analysis of some of the most important semantic fields that will come in the remaining chapters. Such a total picture is indispensable if we want to be in a position to assign the most appropriate places to the particular problems that are going to occupy us regarding the relation between God and man in the Koran. For, as we know already, the proper position of each individual conceptual field, whether large or small, will be determined in a definite way only in terms of the multiple relations all the major fields bear to each other within the total Gestalt.

Furthermore, there is a more immediate reason why we should begin our work by trying to obtain a general view of the conceptual scheme of the Koranic Weltanschauung. As will have been made abundantly clear in the preceding two chapters, the semantical analysis of the Koran, in the sense in which we understand it in this book, does not mean a lexicographical treatment of the whole Koranic vocabulary, i.e., a study of all the words that happen to be there in the Koran, but it means an analytic and systematic study of only the most important words that seem to play a decisive role in characterizing the dominant note¹ that runs through, permeates and dominates the whole Koranic thought. Only the important words of this kind, i.e., the key-words,

1) I quite agree with Dr. Daud Rahbar when he says (*op. cit.*, p. 721) that "what is expected of a great book of revelation is not absolute logical consistency, but consistency of the dominance of an idea. Prophets do not offer philosophy. They offer wisdom of a type, a wisdom which has a dominant note". The search after the dominant note in this sense is our task. Only, this can be done by many different ways and methods, and semantics is one of them.

determine the character of the whole system. But in order to be able to measure the importance of the words and distinguish what is relatively more important from what is relatively unimportant in this particular sense, we must have beforehand a general schematic picture of the whole thing. Otherwise, we would simply end by losing ourselves in the minutiae.

For the purpose of isolating the fundamental conceptual framework of the Koran as a whole, the first requirement is that we should try to read the Book without any preconception. We must, in other words, try not to read into it thoughts that have been developed and elaborated by the Muslim thinkers of the post-Koranic ages in their effort to understand and interpret their Sacred Book each according to his particular position. We must try to grasp the structure of the Koranic world conception in its original form, that is, as it was read and understood by the Prophet's contemporaries and his immediate followers. Strictly speaking, this must always remain an unattainable ideal, and yet at least we should do our best to approach this ideal even a step nearer.

Now in reading the Koran for this purpose, and as a semanticist, the first and overwhelming impression I get is that this is a large multi-strata system standing on a number of basic conceptual oppositions, each one of which constitutes a specific semantic field. Speaking in terms less semantical, I would say that I get the impression that here I am in a world over which reigns an intense atmosphere of spiritual strain and tension. What is before our eyes is surely not a plain, objective description of what has happened, what is happening and what will happen. This is not a world of calm peaceful description.

On the contrary, we feel that there is some intense spiritual drama going on. And a 'drama' always occurs only where there is a dynamic opposition between the principal actors. This is a complicated system of oppositions that are formed, each one of them, by two poles that stand facing each other. The pole is indicated, semantically, by what we have called a 'focus-word'. In short, from the semantical point of view, the Koranic Weltanschauung is capable to be represented as a system built on the principle of conceptual opposition.

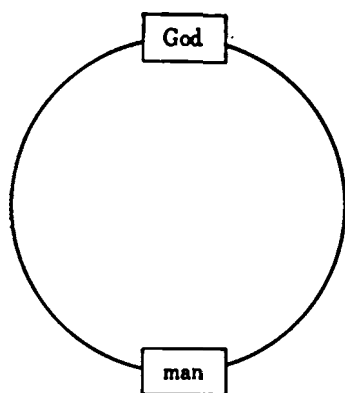
II GOD AND MAN

The first and most important 'opposition' in this sense is constituted by the fundamental relation between God and man, *Allâh* and *insân*. Needless to say, *Allâh*, according to the Koran, is not only the supreme but also the Only Being worthy to be called "being" in the full sense of the word—Reality with a capital letter—to which nothing in the whole world can be opposed. Ontologically, the Koranic world is most evidently theocentric, as I have said more than once. God stands in the very center of the world of being, and all other things, human or non-human, are His creatures and are as such infinitely inferior to Him in the hierarchy of being. There can be, in this sense, nothing that would stand opposed to Him. And this is precisely what was meant when it was said above that, semantically, *Allâh* is the highest focus-word in the vocabulary of the Koran, presiding over all the semantic fields and, consequently, the entire system.

There is, however, a certain respect in which we might feel ourselves justified in putting the concept of "man" (*insân*) at the opposite pole from God. For among all these created things "man" is the one to which is attached so great an importance in the Koran that it attracts at least the same amount of our attention as God. Man, his nature, conduct, psychology, duties and destiny are, in fact, as much the central preoccupation of the Koranic thought as the problem of God Himself. What God is, says and does, becomes a problem chiefly, if not exclusively, in connection with the problem of how man reacts to it. The Koranic thought as a whole is concerned with the problem of the salvation of human beings. If it were not for this problem, the Book would not have been "sent down", as the Koran itself explicitly and repeatedly emphasizes. And in this particular sense, the concept of man is important to such an degree that it forms the second major pole standing face to face with the principal pole, that is, the concept of *Allâh*.

And this basic confrontation of the two major poles with each other constitutes the most important conceptual opposition in the Koran that, together with others, goes to create that intense dynamic and dramatic atmosphere of spiritual tension which, as I have just said, characterizes the Koranic Weltanschauung.

Thus, the world of the Koran may be visualized as a circle with two principal points of reference upon it, opposed to each other, one from above,



the other from below (Diagram). And this circle would symbolize the world of Being as the main stage on which all human dramas are enacted. Jahiliyyah did not know such a circle. The world-view of Jahiliyyah was homocentric. There, man was the sole conceptual pole to which no other basic pole stood in fundamental opposition. Man, his destiny on earth, his position in the tribe to which he belonged, the relation of his tribe to other tribes, his virtues which were essentially tribal in nature, these were the major problems of a Jahili

man. Of course he recognized the existence of unseen powers superior to himself in the scale of being, ranging from Allāh to *Jinn*, but, these occupied, after all, a narrow, limited section of the world of his concern; they were not so important as to constitute an independent major conceptual principle which would divide this world with "man" into two halves. There was, consequently, no atmosphere of spiritual tension running through the whole world of being as a Jahili man conceived it.

Now in the new world of Islam, the dramatic and spiritual tension to which I have just referred is caused, semantically speaking, by a particular relation between the two major conceptual poles, i.e., God and man. This relation is neither simple nor unilateral; it is a multiple and bi-lateral, that is, reciprocal relationship.

This complex relationship may conceptually be analyzed in terms of four major kinds of relation between God and man. In other words, the Koranic "Divina Commedia" is enacted on the main stage to which reference has just been made in the form of four different types of relation between *Allāh* and *insān*.

I Ontological relation: between God as the ultimate source of human existence and man as the representative of the world of being which owes its very existence to God. In more theological terms, the Creator-creature relation between God and man.

II Communicative relation: here, God and man are brought into close correlation with each other—God, of course, taking the initiative—through mutual communication.

Two different ways of communication are to be distinguished: (1) verbal type and (2) non-verbal type. The verbal type of communication from above

to below is Revelation (*waḥy*) in the narrow and technical sense, while from below to above, it takes the form of "prayer" (*du'ā*).

The non-verbal type of communication from above to below is the Divine act of the sending down (*tanzīl*) of the "signs" (*āyāt*). From below to above, the communication takes the form of ritual worship (*ṣalāt*), or more generally, cult practices.

III Lord-servant relation: this relation involves, on the part of God, as the Lord (*rabb*), all concepts relating to His majesty, sovereignty, absolute power, etc., while on the part of man as His "servant" (*'abd*) a whole set of concepts that imply humbleness, modesty, absolute obedience, and other properties that are usually demanded of a servant. This human part of the relation has a negative correlative that consists of the concepts implying haughtiness, arrogance, self-sufficiency and other similar qualities that are comprised in, and associated with, the word *jāhiliyyah*.

IV Ethical relation: this is based on the most basic contrast between two different aspects that are distinguishable in the very concept of God, God of infinite goodness, mercy, forgiveness and benevolence on one hand, and, on the other, God of wrath, and severe, strict and unrelenting justice. Correspondingly, there occurs, on the human side, the basic contrast between "thankfulness" (*shukr*) on the one hand, and the "god-fearing" attitude (*taqwā*), on the other. As we have seen above, *shukr* and *taqwā* together form one category of *imān*, and this last makes a sharp contrast with *kufr* both in the sense of "unthankfulness" and in that of "disbelief".²

III THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

These basic relations once established between God and man, they give birth, in the midst of mankind at large, to a particular group of men who

2) As regards these four basic forms of God-man relation, we have to be content with this synopsis at this stage. We leave the problem here without any further explanation, for it will form our main topic all through the remaining chapters. As to the other aspects of the general Koranic world-view, that we are going to mention in the present chapter, some details will be given in view of the fact that they will not be dealt with properly in this book.

acknowledge them and choose the positive side of the matter as the basis of their outlook on life and existence. What I call here "positive" response consists, as regards the first ontological relation, in their acknowledging God as their Creator, i.e., One who has conferred upon man as an extraordinary favor his very existence and being, and, having given him life, takes care of his destiny. In regard to the second relation, that of communication, it consists in man's responding willingly and whole-heartedly to the divine call and following its guidance to the way of salvation. In regard to the third Lord-servant relation, the positive response means that man throws away from himself all the remnants of his former *jāhiliyyah* and behaves to God, his Master, as truly befits a slave. Lastly, in regard to the ethical relation, it means that he shows "thankfulness" to God's favors and—which is in reality nothing but the reverse side of the same thing—to fear seriously the divine chastisement.

These people form in the nature of the case a compact group, a religious community. This is the concept of "community" (*ummah*), or to be more exact, *ummah muslimah* which originally meant a "community (of people who have) surrendered (themselves to God)"³ but ended by acquiring the meaning of the "Muslim community"—to which the Prophet in the Hadith constantly refers by calling it *ummati* "my community".

The importance of this concept cannot be too much emphasized. Its birth marked really a decisive moment in the history of Islam.⁴ Hitherto in Arabia, the principle of social and political organization had been of an essentially tribal nature. The point needs no laboring because it has been studied so much by so many different authors. In short, blood-kinship had been the most decisive element in the Jahili Arab conception of social unity. Against this time-honored conception, the Koran developed a new idea of social unity based no longer on kinship, but on a common religious belief.

The establishment of this new concept of "religious community" caused

3) "Our Lord, make us submissive to Thee, and of our seed a community submissive to Thee!" (It is Abraham who addresses these words to God) II, v. 122/128.

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةٌ مُسْلِمَةٌ لَكَ

4) The relevance of this concept is in no way restricted to the period we are dealing with in this book; it extends into all corners of Islamic history, as Sir Hamilton A. R. Gibb writes: "The key word for everything that has to do with Islamic culture is *Umma* Community. It is in the historical development of this concept and its modalities that the true significance of Islamic history and culture must be sought". ("The Community in Islamic History", in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 108, 1963, p. 173)

naturally a great disturbance in the structure of the semantic field of "society". First of all, it created a sharp conflict between the concept of the Islamic *ummah* and that of those who definitely and openly refused to come into this community, i.e., *kuffâr* the "Kâfirs", the latter category including within it as a subdivision the smaller category of *munâfiqûn* "hypocrites", who pretended outwardly to belong in the Muslim community, but, in reality, remained in the other camp.⁵

But there was a far more delicate problem there. The concept of *ummah* once established in Islam, the Muslims found that there were around them several other "religious communities" which had already been long existent when Islam arose, like Jews, Christians, Sabians, and Zoroastrians. The Koran calls these as a whole "the People of Scripture" (*ahl al-kitâb*), meaning those who possess a Scripture, those nations to whom, in each case, a Prophet has been sent, who has brought them a book of Revelation.

Looking back from this standpoint, the Koran divides the whole mankind before the advent of Islam into two major categories: (1) the People of Scripture and (2) those to whom the Book has not been given, people with no Scripture (*ummiyyûn*). And these two categories are sharply opposed to each other. The opposition is clearly mentioned in several verses; for example:

وَقُلْ لِلَّذِينَ أَنْوَا الْكِتَابَ وَالْأَمِينِينَ

"And say to both those to whom the Book has been given and the *ummiyyûn*⁶....", the context itself makes it clear that, in this verse, "those to whom the Book has been given" refers to the Jews and the Christians, while by *ummiyyûn* the idolatrous Arabs are meant.

It is important to notice that the pagan Arabs, before the advent of Islam are called here, as in many other places, *ummiyyûn* "non-Scripture people". Properly speaking, they are not yet Kâfirs (*kuffâr* or *kâfirûn*), because as yet they have never been admonished to open their eyes to the marvelous work of God. Real Kâfirs are those who consciously show the most determined opposition to the Divine scheme, after the Revelation has made the truth clear to them. The Prophet himself was a pagan, an erring man⁷ (*dâll*), before he began to receive Revelation.

5) For an analysis of the concept of religious hypocrisy, see *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran*, chapter XI.

(6 III, v. 19/20.

7) وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَى (God) found thee erring (away from the right path) and guided thee". (XCIII, 7)

Be this as it may, the fact that in the Koranic thought the concept of *ummiyyûn* is most closely related with (1) that of *kitâb* "the Book"—that is, in short, Revelation—and (2) that of *rasûl* "the Messenger" who is charged with the task of transmitting the Book to his people, and (3) the idea that the people before Revelation are in the state of *ḡalâl* "erring", is shown by the following verse:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

"He it is who has sent among the *ummiyyûn* a Messenger (*rasûl*) from among them, so that he might recite His revelations to them, purify them, and teach them the Book (*kitâb*) and the Wisdom, while heretofore they were clearly in error (*ḡalâl*)"

All this would seem to imply an extremely important thing, namely, that, according to the Koran, the Arabs, who had been one of the *ummiy* peoples, were raised by the "Arabic" Revelation for the first time in their history to the rank of a People of Scripture. The concept of Islamic *ummah* is based on this thought. But the idea of the People of Scripture comprises many communities besides that of the Muslims, that are parallel to the latter, particularly the Jewish and Christian communities. And this situation makes it incumbent upon the youngest *ummah* to define its own position among the whole People of Scripture. Thus the idea is advanced that the Muslims are now "the best *ummah* ever produced for mankind"⁸ and that God has made them "a middle *ummah*",⁹ meaning thereby probably an *ummah* that occupies the central position in the whole, away from all the extremes that are represented by other communities within the People of Scripture.

As a matter of fact, the People of Scripture in pre-Islamic times, in the Koranic view, had conspicuously degenerated. Originally they were men of the true religion, who, following their prophets, believed in God and His words. By the time Islam arose, however, they had consciously falsified the truth that had been revealed to them by God, adopting some parts of it that pleased

8) كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْعُرْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

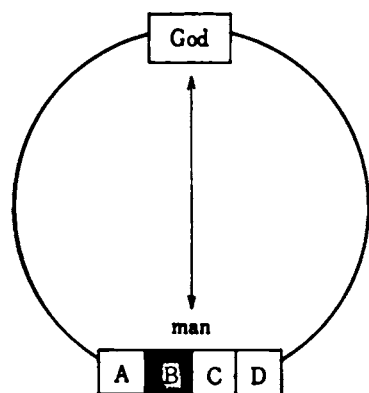
"You are the best community ever produced for mankind, enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong, and believing in God". (III, 106/110)

9) وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ "Likewise We made you a middle *ummah*, that you might be witnesses to all people" (II, v. 137/143)

them, and rejecting or concealing others. In short, the original pure religion, which the Koran calls the "Ḥanifitic religion" symbolized by Abraham the monotheist, *ḥanif*¹⁰ had been corrupted into a kind of disbelief. Islam, according to what the Koran itself declares, was a movement for cleaning up these religious scandals with a view to reconstructing the true monotheism in its pure original form.

Thus we see that the relation of the Islamic *ummah* with the People of Scripture (*ahl al-kitāb*) is far from being a simple and straightforward one. On the one hand, the Islamic *ummah* stands closely affiliated with *ahl al-kitāb*, the Jews and Christians in particular, but, on the other, they are opposed to each other with bitter enmity between them. And on the whole, this enmity becomes more and more conspicuous in course of time, and this process is clearly reflected in the history of the Koranic thought. In this sense, the

conceptual opposition of the Islamic *ummah* and other People of Scripture is no less sharp than that of the Islamic *ummah* and the idolatrous Kāfirs. The diagram is intended to show the general situation of mankind, in the Koranic world-view, that resulted from the establishment of the Islamic *ummah*, which, again, was a result of the establishment of the four basic relations between God and the Arabs through Muhammad the Prophet. It is to be remarked that here again the whole system is clearly based on the principle of multiple conceptual opposition.



- A = People of Scripture
- B = Muslims
- C = Hypocrites
- D = Kāfirs

In the above diagram, the sector marked B symbolizes the Islamic *ummah*. It is worth noticing that the inner structure of this *ummah* as a social organization based on a new concep-

tion of society became soon a matter of grave concern to the believers who lived within it. This of course was a phenomenon peculiar to the period that followed the Hijrah, i.e. the Medinan period, when the *ummah* first came into being. As everybody knows, the Islamic community, once established in Medina, grew larger at an astonishing speed and became more and more firmly consolidated in Arabia. This state of affairs is reflected in the Koran itself, and the problem of the inner structure of the Muslim community is dealt with in

10) On this important term, see the next chapter, section V.

great detail in the Sûras revealed in Medina in terms of the concepts of social system.

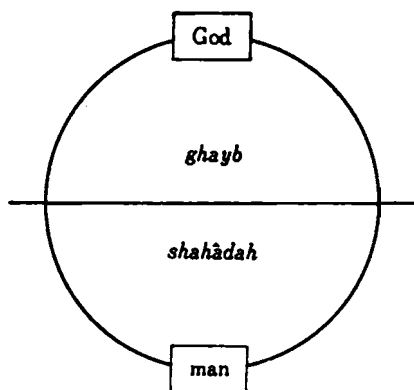
These concepts concern the laws and regulations governing the various human relations within the Islamic community. Unlike most of the Koranic key-terms that have to do with relations between God and man, the key-terms of this field express primarily relations between man and man in social life in this world. They constitute a large semantic field of social system. These concepts may be conveniently classified into seven sub-fields: (1) marital relations comprising concepts that relate to marriage, divorce, adultery and fornication; (2) parents-children relations, comprising the duties of parents towards children, and the duties of children towards their parents, and regulations concerning adoption; (3) laws of inheritance; (4) criminal laws concerning particularly murder, theft, and retaliation; (5) commercial relations comprising concepts of contract, debt, usury, bribery, and justice in commercial dealings; (6) laws concerning charity, i.e., alms, legal and voluntary; (7) laws concerning slaves.

As is obvious, this vast network of words signifying various human relations within the closed community of Islam is destined to develop later into a grand-scale system of Islamic jurisprudence. And we could perhaps find the best place for discussing the key-concepts of this field when we come down from the Koranic stage to the semantics of the vocabulary of Islamic Law, because there in the major systems of Law we find all of these concepts minutely analyzed by the Muslim thinkers themselves in a methodological way which is not so far removed from our semantical analysis.¹¹

IV THE UNSEEN AND THE VISIBLE

The Koranic view divides the present world in which man lives into two halves: "the Domain of the Unseen" (*'âlam al-ghayb*) and "the Domain of the

11) Those who are particularly interested in the Koranic concepts of social system may obtain a general introductory knowledge from *The Social Laws of the Qurân* by Robert Roberts, London, 1925, although the investigation is not conducted from a semantical point of view. For a more detailed survey of the subject, I would recommend Muḥammad Darwaza's book, *al-Dustûr al-Qur'ânî fî Shu'ûn al-Ḥayâh*, Cairo, 1956.



Visible (*'âlam al-shahâdah*). This is the second major conceptual opposition discernible in the world-view of the Koran. And these are the two basic forms of the whole world of being, which is nothing but the main stage on which the aforesaid Divina Commedia is enacted.

Of these two, only the visible part is at man's disposal, while God reigns over both of them, as we are told, for example, in *Sûrah al-Zumar*:¹²

قُلْ اللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ

"Say: O Allâh! Thou creator of the heavens and the earth! Thou who knowest the Unseen (*al-ghayb*) and the Visible (*al-shahâdah*)!"

It is to be remarked that this distinction itself is meaningful only in reference to the basic epistemological capacity of the human mind. It is, in other words, a distinction made purely from the human point of view, for, from the standpoint of God, there can be no *ghayb* at all. He is omniscient, as the Koran declares so categorically and so repeatedly. "Allâh encompasses everything in knowledge".¹³ Thus, to take a typical example regarding the knowledge of the Hour (*al-sâ'ah*),¹⁴ i.e., the knowledge as to when exactly the Day of Judgment would come, which was one of the paramount problems of the day for both the Muslims and the Kâfirs, they were told that Allâh alone knew "when", and no one else in the world, not even the Prophet himself.¹⁵

يَسْأَلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ . قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُونُ قَرِيبًا .

"Men will ask thee about the Hour. Answer: 'The knowledge of it is only with Allâh'. What can make thee know? It may be that the Hour is nigh".

When asked such a grave question concerning the *ghayb*, the Prophet

12) XXXIX, v. 47/46

13) وَإِنَّ إِلَهَهُ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُونُ قَرِيبًا (LXV, v. 12)

14) See above, chapter I, section II.

15) XXXIII, v. 63

should answer only in the following way:

إِنْ أَتَرَىٰ أَقْرَبَ مَا تُوعَدُونَ أَمْ يَجْعَلُ لَهُ رَبِّي أَمَدًا . عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَىٰ غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا .

"I do not know whether that which you are promised is nigh, or whether my Lord will appoint a longer term for it. The Knower of the *ghayb* He is, and to none does He disclose His *ghayb*!"¹⁶

All this because man is so made to live in the world of the Visible (*shahādah*) alone. His knowledge does not go beyond the limit of his natural domain.

The words themselves, *ghayb* and *shahādah* in the sense of "the invisible" and "the visible" respectively, were not in any way unknown to the pre-Islamic Arabs. Jahiliyyah knew and used them. It is remarkable that even the expression '*alam al-ghayb*' occurs in a poem of a famous pre-Islamic poet 'Antarah b. Shaddād, for example, in the sense of the "unknown future";¹⁷

وَلَا تَحْشَوْا مِمَّا يَبْدُرُ فِي غَدٍ * فَمَا جَاءَنَا مِنْ عَالَمٍ انْفِيسٍ مُّخْبِرٍ

"Do not worry about what will be measured out to you tomorrow, for nobody has ever brought us any news from the world of *ghayb*".

But more generally, the word in Jahili literature means things that lie beyond the power of human perception in the most material sense. The following verse by a poet¹⁸ of the Hudhayl tribe describes a wild bull chased by a hunter, whose presence the former perceives by the ear, but not by the eye.

يَرْمِي بَيْنَيْهِ الْغُيُوبَ وَطَرَفُهُ * مُنْغِي بِصَدَقِ طَرَفُهُ مَا يَسْمَعُ

"He tries to discern with his eyes what is hidden in the invisible (i.e. in a place which he is unable to see through), compressing tight his eyelids, and his eyesight confirms what his ears have heard."

The same word is often used in the sense of "what is hidden in the heart" "what is kept secret in the heart". For example, al-Ḥuṭay'ah says:¹⁹

لَمَّا بَدَأَ لِي مِنْكُمْ غَيْبٌ أَنْفِكُمْ

"When at last the real sentiment which had been kept secret in your hearts became disclosed to me....", meaning thereby the hidden hatred towards him.

16) LXXII, v. 26/25-26.

17) *Diwan 'Antarah*, p. 83, v. 4.

18) *Diwan al-Hudhaliyyin*, I, Cairo, 1945, p. 1945, p. II, v. 2. The poet is Abū Dhu'ayb. The word *ghayb* appears in this verse in the plural form, *ghuyūb*.

19) al-Ḥuṭay'ah, a *Mukhaḍram* poet. *Majānī al-Hadīthab*, by al-Bustānī, II., p. 37.

But there seems to be no trace in pre-Islamic heathenism of the word's having been used in a religious sense. The same is true of its positive counterpart, *shahādah*, the basic meaning of which is "to be present in one's own person at an event, and be witnessing what actually happens".²⁰

V THE PRESENT WORLD AND THE HEREAFTER

From an entirely different point of view, this world as man actually experiences it and lives in it is, as a whole, called *al-dunyā*, lit. "the Lower" or "the Nearer" world. The Koran mostly uses the phrase *al-ḥayāh al-dunyā* "the lower life" in place of the simple word *al-dunyā*. The denotatum of this word in the Koran is the same world of being and existence which we have symbolized above by a circle with "God" and "man" as two points of reference. In other terms, it denotes the same main stage of the Divina Commedia on which God and man come into contact with each other in the four major types of relation as distinguished above. Only, the angle from which it is viewed is now quite different from the preceding one.

To understand this point it will be enough to notice that the word *al-dunyā* belongs to a particular category of words, which we might call 'correlation'-words, that is, those words that stand for correlate concepts, like "husband" and "wife", "brother" and "sister", etc.: each member of the pair presupposes the other semantically and stands on the very basis of this correlation. A man can be a "husband" only in reference to "wife". The concept of "husband", in other words, implicitly contains that of "wife", and vice versa. In just the same way, the concept of *al-dunyā* presupposes the concept of the "world to come", i.e., the "Hereafter" (*al-ākhirah*), and stands in contrast to it. And the Koran is very conscious of this correlation whenever it uses either of the two words, not to speak of those frequent cases where both are mentioned together in the same breath, as, for example, in the following verse:

تَرِيدُونَ عَرَصَ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ

20) The contrast between *shahādah* and *ghayb* in this sense is most clearly observable in a verse by a Hudhayl poet Ma'qil b. Khuwaylid (*Dirwān Hudb.*, III, Cairo, 1950, p. 70, v. 3).

"You desire the ephemeral goods of the present world (*al-dunyâ*), while God desires (for you) the Hereafter (*al-âkhirah*)".²¹

The word *al-dunyâ* occurs frequently, in pre-Islamic literature. And this very fact would seem to suggest that the correlate concept of *âkhirah* was also known to the pre-Islamic Arabs. The famous authority on pre-Islamic poetry al-Aṣma'î (740-828) is often quoted as saying: "the major subject of 'Antarah was *ḥarb* (war), that of 'Umar b. Abi Rabī'ah was *shabâb* (youth—always associated with love and the pursuit of sensual pleasures), while the main subject of Ummayyah b. Abi al-Ṣalt was *al-âkhirah* (the Hereafter)."

The fact that here the "Hereafter" is put in close connection with the name of Umayyah b. Abi al-Ṣalt²² would suggest that this concept, and consequently that of *al-dunyâ*, too, were most probably propagated in pre-Islamic Arabia first by Judaism and Christianity. To look on the present world as something "lower" is possible only where there is firmly established the idea of the Other World being far more valuable and important than the present world. Such a view is surely not of the pure Arabian paganism, whose fundamental outlook on human existence may be aptly described as 'pessimistic hedonism' stemming from the deep-seated conviction that there can be absolutely nothing after death. This typically Jahili view of life we find well epitomized in a verse like this:²³

نَلِّ مَلَامَاتِ الرِّجَالِ بِرَبِّهِ * وَنَفِّرْ شُرُورَ الْيَوْمِ بِاللَّهْوِ وَاللَّيْلِ

"Let us forget reproachful words of the people with cups abrim, and cut away the ills of the Day with jest and joy".

It is evident that the disparaging view of the present world, that is, to look on *Dunyâ* as literally *dunyâ* "lower", belongs properly to a spiritual religion. That such a view of *Dunyâ* was very common in the Christian circles in and around Arabia in ancient times may be easily seen by even a cursory inspection of the history of Christian literature in Arabic. Here I will give a typical example.

The famous princess of the Christian Court of al-Ḥīrah, Ḥurqah, daughter

21) VIII, v. 68/67.

22) On this poet and his singularly monotheistic thought, see the next chapter section V.

23) The poet is Iyâs b. al-Aratt, *Dirwân al-Ḥamâsah* CDLXXXV, 2. It is quite interesting to note that the same words *lahw* "jesting" "diversion" and *la'ib* "sporting" occur in this combination also in the Koran, but with a completely reversed intention, i.e., the intention of disparaging the so-called goods of the present world:

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهْوٌ وَلَهْوٌ وَلِلنَّارِ الْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ . أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ .

of the last king of this dynasty al-Nu'mân b. al-Mundhir, and noted for her excellent personality as well as for her poetic talent, is related to have recited a poem which begins with the following two lines in the presence of the Muslim general Sa'd b. Abi Waqqâs, when he defeated the Persians at al-Qâdisiyyah:²⁴

سَعَيْنَا نَسُوسَ النَّاسِ وَالْأَمْرُ أَمْرُنَا * إِذَا نَعَنْ فِيهِمْ سَوْفَةً تَنْتَصِفُ
فَأَنْفٍ لِنِنَا لَا يَلُومُ تَعَمُّهَا * تَقَلَّبَ تَارَاتٍ بِنَا وَتَصَرَّفَ

The meaning of the verses is somewhat like this: "We have been ruling the people with an absolute authority in our hands, when, all of a sudden we find ourselves changed into their subjects who must serve them. Alas, how detestable is the Duniyâ in which no happiness lasts for long! The Duniyâ tosses us about in its shifts and changes, itself being in perpetual ebb and flow".

However this may be, the word *al-duniyâ* itself seems to have been widely used among the pre-Islamic Arabs even outside the monotheistic circles, although it is extremely doubtful whether any religious value was attached to the concept. In the following verse, for instance, the poet²⁵ recognizes in the Duniyâ something inspiring confidence, worthy to be relied upon, and therefore, positively valuable.

تَزَوَّدْ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعًا فَإِنَّهُ * عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ خَيْرٌ زَادِ الزَّوَدِ

"Supply yourself for your journey (viz. of life) with the goods of the Duniyâ, for, surely, they are, whatever happens, the best provision for a man preparing for a journey".

There may be in this verse some vague consciousness of the basic correlation between the Duniyâ and the Other World still lingering on, but in the next one by 'Antarah there is no longer any trace of such consciousness discernible:²⁶

أَذِلَّ لِعَبْلَةٍ مِنْ قَرَطٍ وَجَبِي * وَأَجْعَلَهَا مِنَ الدُّنْيَا اهْتِمَامِي

"From the excess of passionate love, I lower myself to (my beloved) 'Ablah (i.e., I content myself with being a "slave" of 'Ablah), and of all things of the Duniyâ I make her the sole concern of mine".

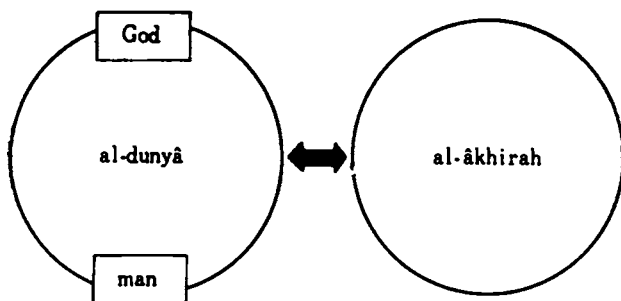
"The life of the present world is naught but a pastime and diversion. Surely far better is the Abode of the Hereafter for those who are godfearing. Do you not understand?" (VI, v. 32) See also LVII, v. 19-20/20.

24) *al-Ḥamāsah*, CDXLIX, 1-2.

25) 'Abid b. al-Abras, *Diwân*, Beirut, 1958, XV, 28.

26) 'Antarah, *Diwân*, p. 168, v. 14.

As we have seen above, the Koran re-establishes this conceptual correlation in its original form, and puts afresh these two concepts into direct opposition



to each other. And this is the third of the major conceptual oppositions which, as I said, contribute towards creating the intense atmosphere of spiritual tension that characterizes the whole Weltanschauung of the Koran.

As regards the conceptual structure of *al-ākhirah* itself, we should remark that it is also based on the principle of dichotomy, i.e., here again we see a basic opposition of two major concepts: the Garden (*al-jannah*, pl. *al-jannât*) and the Hell Fire (*al-jahannam*). And this determines the general structure of this

field. The conception of the Hereafter in this form does not, in the nature of the case, appear very often in pre-Islamic poetry, but it would be too rash to say that it was completely unknown. As a matter of fact, in view of the cultural situation of Arabia in late Jahiliyyah we should rather expect to meet with such a conception among the Arabs. There is one interesting example in 'Antarah's *Dirwân*. Describing his love-affair with 'Ablah, the poet says;

نَعِيمٌ وَصَلِكِ جَنَاتٍ مُزَخْرَفَةٌ * وَنَارُ هَجْرِكِ لَا تُبْقِي وَلَا تَذَرُ

"The bliss of being united with you is a heavenly garden (*jannât*) beautifully adorned, while the fire of being separated from you burns out everything, leaving nothing behind".²⁷

It is interesting to note that the poet here compares the unbearable torment of separation to the scorching Fire of Hell that burns to ashes everything that is thrown into it. Although he does not actually use the word *jahannam*,

27) 'Antarah, *Dirwân*, p. 80, v. 8.

"Hell" in this verse, the image is palpably there. And this, if the verse is genuine, would be indicative of a strong influence on the pre-Islamic world-view of the Judeo-Christian religious imagery. Besides, such indications are far from being rare in pre-Islamic literature.

In any case, the word itself *jahannam* occurs in the *Diwān* of the same poet. This is rather an exceptional case.

مَاءُ الْحَيَاةِ بِنَلَّةٍ كَجَهَنَّمَ * وَجَهَنَّمَ بِالْمِزِّ أَطْيَبُ مَزَلٍ

"The taste of the water of life in abjection is like Jahannam, while even Jahannam, if only one lives there in glory and power, is an abode sweet and delightful".²⁸

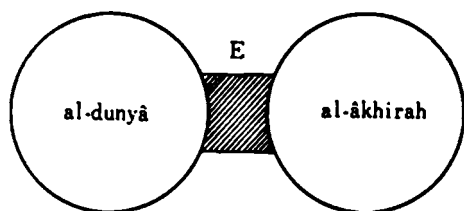
There is a point which is extremely important as regards the position of the concepts of *jannah* and *jahannam*. This conceptual pair is not there in the Koranic image of the Hereafter simply as something lying far away from this present world. On the contrary, it is most directly and immediately connected with the human life on this earth, in this very present world. The two concepts are not only directly connected with that of *al-dunyā*; the whole system is arranged in such a way that they work directly upon the life of the *Dunyā* and control it in terms of the eternal 'Reward' and 'Punishment'. The presence of *jannah* and *jahannam* must make itself felt in the form of the moral conscience whenever a man does something, whenever a man acts in this world. It is the very source of the moral values. Man, as long as he lives as a member of the Muslim community, is morally demanded to choose always certain ways of acting that are connected with *jannah*, and to avoid those that are connected with *jahannam*. This is the very simple and very vigorous principle of moral conduct in this new community.

So here again we meet with that phenomenon of the re-evaluation and reassessment of old concepts in Islam. The concepts themselves of *jannah* and *jahannam* might very well have been known to the Jahili Arabs, but the position they occupied in the Jahili conceptual system was quite peripheral, so peripheral that they were not even key-terms. In the Koran, they are given an entirely different place in an entirely different semantic field. Now they are key-terms of central importance; they represent in clear imagery the good and the bad, the right and the wrong on this earth as God Himself defines them.

28) *ibid*, p. 135, v. 10.

VI ESCHATOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

Between the Dunyâ and the Hereafter the Koran puts something that acts



as a connecting link, something representing the transition stage between the two worlds (The sector E in the diagram). It is a particular group of concepts that we may roughly classify as eschatological concepts: The Last

Day, the Day of Judgment, Resurrection, Reckoning and similar ones.

Of all the concepts that fall under this category, the most controversial among the Meccans in the first days of Islam was that of the resurrection of the dead. Many of them responded with sheer denial and scorn to the Koranic message of the resurrection connected with the concept of the Judgment of the Last Day. "Who shall quicken the bones when they have rotted off?"²⁹—this brief sentence summarizes their attitude toward this conception. For them it was sheer nonsense that they would come to life again in a bodily form long after they had become decayed bones. Often they dismissed the teaching as "old fables"³⁰ and "nightmare illusions";³¹ if such a thing did happen, they said, it would be "nothing but a magic manifest".³²

This attitude toward the concept of bodily resurrection has evidently its root and source in the more general and more fundamental world-view of those people to which the Koran makes a clear reference in an oft-quoted passage which runs:

وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ

"They say; there is nothing but this present life of ours; we die and we live, and it is only Time that destroys us".³³

Such was, indeed, the typical, representative attitude of the Meccans on the problem of resurrection raised by the Koran in an uncompromising way. At bottom there is a deep tone of nihilism here; nihilism coming from the

29) مَنْ يُغَيِّ الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ (XXXVI, v. 28)

30) أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (LXXXIII, v. 73)

31) أَفْهَاتُ أَحْلَامٍ (XXI, v. 5)

32) إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ (XI, v. 10/7)

33) XLV, v. 23/24

keenest consciousness that there can be nothing beyond the grave. The same nihilism which, as we have seen, drove the Arabs of the desert to hedonism, manifested itself, with the Meccans, under the form of an intense and exclusive concentration on the prosperity in this world. They were, in short, clever able merchants, worldly-minded businessmen who had no wish at all to learn about the future life and the Last Day, because in their eyes there could be no such things. The negative attitude of the Meccans toward the Koranic concept of resurrection can easily be understood in terms of this business-man mentality. It was the direct outgrowth of the self-confidence—*istighmā* lit. "the thinking of one's self independent" as the Koran calls it—of the prospering merchants.

However, it would be dangerous to generalize it and say that the concept of resurrection was unknown in Jahiliyyah. There are certain undeniable traces in pre-Islamic poetry of a belief in the Hereafter associated with the idea of the Day of Reckoning beyond the grave. Some of them may quite reasonably be traced back to a Christian or Jewish source. The very famous verses (vv. 27–28) in the *Mu'allaqah* of Zuhayr b. Abi Sulmā, in which there is an explicit reference to the Heavenly Record (*kitāb*) which registers all evil actions of men for the Day of Reckoning (*yaum al-ḥisāb*) furnish an outstanding example.

فَلَا تَكْتُمَنَّ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُورِكُمْ * لِيَخْفَىٰ وَمَهْمَا يُكْتَمِ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ
يُؤَخِّرْ قَبُوضَهُ فِي كِتَابٍ قَيِّدَحَرَّ * لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ أَوْ يُعَجِّلَ قَيْنَمَ

The verses mean literally: "Never try to hide from Allāh what is within your breast (i.e. whatever evil thoughts you nourish secretly) so that it might not be disclosed, for whatever is concealed from God, He knows. It (i.e. the Divine punishment) may be deferred and (your evil) set down in the Book and kept for the Day of Reckoning, or it may be accelerated (i.e. be inflicted already in the present world) and vengeance taken; (in any case, you will never be able to escape Divine punishment for any wrong you have done)".

A generation or two ago, it was fashionable among the Orientalists to explain away these and other similar verses in pre-Islamic poetry—and the examples are far more numerous than one might expect—as due to interpolation and forgery by later Muslim philologists. We have learnt to be much more cautious in this matter. Instead of emphasizing the occurrence of ideas of this kind in Jahiliyyah as a strong argument against the authenticity of its literature, we are today inclined to take it rather as a confirmation of the view that the intellectual atmosphere of Arabia in late Jahiliyyah was not at all purely pagan, but was

in general permeated by monotheistic ideas, for, as we shall see in the next chapter, such ideas are clearly presupposed by the Koran itself in its refutation of the Kâfirs' view on Allâh.

As regards Zuhayr's verses just quoted, which, by the way, ibn Qutaybah in his *Book on Poetry and Poets* considers an indication that this poet believed in the Resurrection, and which modern scholars have tended to explain away as forgery, I think the truth of the matter becomes clear when we reflect a little on the general situation in which Zuhayr composed this poem.

The tribes to whom Zuhayr addressed these words were, as Charles Lyall³⁴ pointed out long ago, living in the midst of people who were well familiar with Christian and Jewish religious ideas. To the west and north were Yathrib, Khaybar and Taimâ', all flourishing Jewish centers, to the north the the tribe of Kalb, almost entirely Christian, and Tayyi' where Christianity was spreading steadily. In such a cultural situation there is nothing strange about the fact that some Biblical ideas appear as important concepts in Zuhayr's poems.

This, of course, should not be taken to mean that the Arabs before the advent of Islam were, in general and as a whole, already quite familiar with the major religious concepts of Judeo-Christian origin. Even those of the Judeo-Christian concepts that were relatively well-known among the pagan Arabs did not evidently form the genuine Jahili Weltanschauung. The notion of Resurrection entertained by the ordinary Arabs of the desert were also presumably a far vaguer and weaker one than that expressed by Zuhayr in the lines we have examined. And yet the presence itself of notions of this kind among them is also difficult to deny. The evidence is not far to seek.

All readers of the Koran know that in this Book the idea of the resurrection of the dead body is expressed usually by words like *ba'th* (verb *ba'atha*) and *nashr* (verb *anshara*). In the Koran, we meet with the Kâfirs saying:

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ

"There is only our present life, and we shall never be raised (*mab'ûthina* from *ba'atha*)"³⁵

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا مَوْتُنَا الْأُولَىٰ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُنشَرِينَ

"There is nothing but our first death; we shall never be raised (*munsharina* from *anshara*)"³⁶

34) Charles Lyall, *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, London, 1930, in the explanatory notes on this *Mu'allaqab*, pp. 119-120.

35) VI, v. 29.

36) XLIV, v. 34/35.

This negation itself of *ba'th* and *nashr* would be unthinkable without supposing that the Kâfirs did possess from the beginning the concepts of *ba'th* and *nashr* understood in the sense of the resurrection of the dead. Generally speaking, you can only negate a word when you know what it means. This view is confirmed by a similar usage of these words by pre-Islamic Arabs. For example, al-Shaddâkh b. Ya'mar, a Jahili poet, says:³⁷

الْقَوْمُ أَشَالَكُمْ لَهُمْ شَعْرٌ * فِي الرَّأْسِ لَا يُنْشَرُونَ إِنْ قُتِلُوا

The poet is here trying to encourage his tribesmen who are flinching from attacking their powerful enemy, saying that "our enemies are also ordinary men like you, who have hair on their heads, and who will never be revived (*nashr*) once they are killed". The expression "they will never be revived" would be completely pointless and meaningless if the concept of *nashr* 'resurrection' were unknown.

The word *hashr* is more characteristic, because it means precisely resurrection on the Day of Judgment. 'Antarah talks proudly of his glorious fame as a warrior which will last till the time of General Assembly.³⁸ And Salmah al-Ju'fi, a *Mukhadram* poet, bewailing the death of his brother says:³⁹

وَكُنْتُ أَرَى كَالْمَوْتِ مِنْ بَيْنِ لَيْلَةٍ * فَكَيْفَ بَيْنِ كَانَ مِيعَادُهُ الْحَشْرُ

"I used to suffer something like death from even the separation of one day; how can I endure a long separation which comes to an end only by meeting again on the day of resurrection (*hashr*)?"

We may also point out in this connection a very interesting heathen custom of *baliyyah* as something indicative of the existence in Jahiliyyah of a belief in resurrection. In the days of Arabian paganism, when a man died, his riding-camel was tied up at his grave, her eyes plucked out, her fore-shank bound to the upper arm, and she was left there without food and water till she died. The custom is referred to very often in Arabic literature. An example will suffice here.⁴⁰

أَوْ مَنْ لِأَشْعَثَ بَعْلٍ أَرْمَلَةٍ * مِثْلَ الْبَلْبَةِ سَمَلَةِ الْهَدْمِ

"Now who will help this miserable fellow, husband of a starving woman, (lean) as a *baliyyah*-camel, and clad in rags?"

37) *Diwân al-Hamâsab*, XL, 2.

38) 'Antarah, *Diwân*, p. 80, v. 12, [ذِكْرٌ] يَنْوُمُ إِلَى أَوَّانِ الدَّحْشَرِ

39) *al-Hamâsab*, CCCLXXXV, 3.

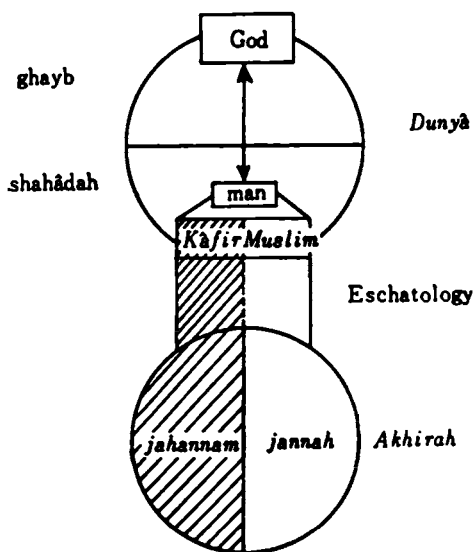
40) The poet is al-Jumayh al-Asadi. *Diwân al-Mufaddaliyyât*, Cairo, 1942, CIX, v. 13, p. 368. See also *Mu'allaqah* of Hârith, v. 14.

According to the explanation given by the Arab authorities of the Abbasid period, the pre-Islamic Arabs kept up this old custom because they believed that the dead man would ride upon his camel thus starved to death by the grave of her master and come to the place of Gathering (*maḥshar*) on the Resurrection Day.

Without giving full credit to this kind of explanation, we may be fairly confident in concluding from what we have seen that the pre-Islamic Arabs had at least a vague notion of Resurrection and the Judgment Day. Only, as in the case of all other major religious concepts, it was not given a definite place in a definite system of concepts. This and similar concepts were simply there, scattered about here and there, with no coherent internal connection between them. This means that although there were eschatological concepts in Jahiliyyah, there was no clearly defined and solidly established semantic field of eschatology, as a middle field between the *Dunyâ* and the Hereafter. In any society, there are a number of stray concepts having no definite semantic field to belong in. Concepts of this sort, lacking support from any strong coherent system of concepts, are weak and cannot in any way play a decisive role in the culture. This is the most fundamental difference between the pre-Islamic concepts of eschatology and the Koranic ones.

By way of conclusion I would give here in a simple diagrammatic form the general structure of the Koranic Weltanschauung, to which we have been

led by this preliminary analysis. This furnishes us with a general framework in which every Koranic key-concept will be given a proper place. In the following chapter only the semantical structure of the first—but patently the most important—part of this whole system will be dealt with. In other words, we shall be engaged in examining in detail the structure of the *Dunyâ* in terms of the fourfold relation between God and man, which we mentioned at the beginning of the present chapter.



CHAPTER IV

ALLAH

I THE WORD ALLAH, ITS 'BASIC' AND 'RELATIONAL' MEANINGS

As I have pointed out repeatedly in the course of the previous account, *Allāh* is the highest 'focus-word' in the Koranic system, which is surpassed by no other word in rank and importance. The Weltanschauung of the Koran is essentially theocentric, and quite naturally in this system the concept of Allāh reigns over the whole from above, and exerts a deep influence on the semantic structure of all the key-words. Whatever aspect of the Koranic thought one may wish to study, it is necessary that one should have from the outset a clear idea as to how this concept is structured semantically. This is why I have decided to devote a whole chapter to a somewhat detailed analysis of the concept before entering upon the consideration of our major problem, that of the fourfold relation between God and man. It goes without saying that the real semantic structure of the word *Allāh* will become fully clear only after we have analyzed this God—man relation, because, as I said at the beginning of the last chapter, God in the Koranic Weltanschauung does not subsist in His glorious self-sufficing solitude and stand aloof from mankind as does the God of Greek philosophy, but deeply involves Himself in human affairs. Leaving this latter aspect of the problem to the following chapters, I would like to concentrate in the present chapter on the more specific subject of the pre-Koranic history of the concept of Allāh. This will put us in a better position to see what is really original in the Islamic concept of God, and will thereby serve as a good preliminary to the analysis that will come later of the fundamental relation between God and man in the Koranic thought.

Let us begin by remarking that the name itself of *Allāh* is common to Jahiliyyah and Islam. When, in other words, the Koranic Revelation began to use this word, it was not introducing a new name of God, a name strange and alien to the ears of the contemporary Arabs. The first problem, then, that we

must answer is: Was the Koranic concept of Allāh a continuation of the pre-Islamic one, or did the former represent a complete break with the latter? Were there some essential—not accidental—ties between the two concepts signified by one and the same name? Or was it a simple matter of a common word used for two different objects?

In order to be able to give a satisfactory answer to these initial questions, we will do well to remember the fact that, when the Koran began to use this name, there immediately arose serious debates among the Arabs of Mecca. The Koranic usage of the word provoked stormy discussions over the nature of this God between the Muslims and the Kāfirs, as is most eloquently attested by the Koran itself.

What does this mean from the semantical point of view? What are the implications of the fact that the name of Allāh was not only known to both parties but was actually used by both parties in their discussion with each other? The very fact that the name of Allāh was common to both the pagan Arabs and the Muslims, particularly the fact that it gave rise to much heated discussion about the concept of God, would seem to suggest conclusively that there was some common ground of understanding between the two parties. Otherwise there could have been neither debate nor discussion at all. And when the Prophet addressed his adversaries in the name of Allāh, he did so simply and solely because he knew that this name meant something—and something important—to their minds too. If this were not so, his activity would have been quite pointless in this respect.

Speaking more generally, a name, i.e., a word, is a symbol of something; a name is always the name of something. So when a man addresses another using a particular word, and the latter understands his speech and even gives a retort, we may reasonably suppose that the name points at least to some conceptual element which is common to both parties, however much they may differ from each other in their understanding of the name as regards all other elements. And this common semantic element in our particular case must have been something referring to an extremely important aspect of the concept of Allāh, seeing that it raised such a keen and crucial issue among the Arabs of that time.

Now the problem is: What was this common element? We may answer this question conveniently in terms of the methodological distinction between 'basic' and 'relational' meaning. In other words, the common semantic element of which we are talking now may be sought for in two different directions.

Let us begin with the 'basic' side of the matter, keeping well in mind that the 'basic' meaning does not exhaust the common element in question.

As regards the 'basic' meaning of *Allāh*, we may remark that many Western scholars have compared rightly—to my mind—the word in its formal aspect with the Greek *ho theos* which means quite simply 'the God'. On such an abstract level the name was common to all Arab tribes. In pre-Islamic times each tribe, as a rule, had its own local god or divinity known by a proper name. So, at first, each tribe may have meant its own local divinity when it used an expression equivalent in meaning to "*the God*"; this is quite probable. But the very fact that people began to designate their own local divinity by the abstract form of "*the God*" must have paved the way for the growth of an abstract notion of God without any localizing qualification and then, following this, for a belief in the supreme God common to all the tribes. We meet with similar instances all over the world.

Besides, we must remember, there were the Jews and the Christians with whom the Arabs had constant opportunities of a close cultural contact. And naturally these Jews and Christians both used the same word *Allāh* to denote their own Biblical God. This must have exerted a great influence on the development of the pre-Islamic concept of *Allāh* among the Arabs towards a higher concept than that of a mere tribal divinity, not only among the town-dwellers but also among the pure Bedouins of the desert.

However this may be, it is certain from the Koran alone, that by the time Muhammad began to preach, the pagan Arabs had come to cherish at least a vague idea, and perhaps also a vague belief, in *Allāh* as the highest God standing above the level of local idols.

Thus much we may reasonably assume as the 'basic' meaning of the word *Allāh* in Jahiliyyah. And this much meaning, at least, must the word have carried into the Islamic system when the Koran began to use it as the name of the God of Islamic Revelation. For otherwise, as I have said, even a polemic discussion on this Islamic God could not have been possible between the Muslims and the Meccan pagans.

However, this is not the whole picture. We would commit a grave mistake if we imagined that this 'basic' meaning was the sole point of contact between the two conceptions of God. The thing did not occur in such a way that the pure concept of *Allāh* with its simple 'basic' meaning which is suggested by its formal structure—*Allāh*=*ho theos*—came straight into the Islamic conceptual system falling down, so to speak, from some metaphysical world of pure

concepts. But actually, i.e. historically, it came into the Islamic system through another system, namely, the pre-Islamic system of religious concepts, however crude the latter might have been. Before the name came into Islam, it had already long been part of the pre-Islamic system, and a considerably important part, too.

What does this fact imply, semantically? It implies before anything else that this word, in addition to its 'basic' meaning, had acquired in the Jahili system a great deal of 'relational' meaning peculiar to the Jahili Weltanschauung. And all these 'relational' elements must have been present in the minds of the people of Mecca who listened to the Koranic recitation, at least in the first period of Muhammad's prophetic career, because they were still completely heathen, and were still living in the old traditional Jahili system of concepts. To put it in another way, when the Islamic Revelation began, the pagan Arabs of Mecca could possibly have no other way of understanding the word *Allâh* than by associating with it all the semantic elements that were already present in their minds. This was the first big semantic problem which faced the Prophet Muhammad when he started his prophetic career.

Now the problem is: What were these relational semantic elements which the word had acquired in the Jahili system? and How did Islam react to them? Did it reject them altogether as essentially incompatible with the new conception of God, as one might be tempted to suppose? All the historical evidence that has come down to us speaks eloquently against this view. Since Jahiliyyah and Islam have always been put in sharp contrast, we are almost instinctively inclined to think that there must have occurred a complete break in every respect between the two when Islam arose. However, the Koran itself bears abundant testimony to the fact that the matter was not so simple.

Certainly, of all the 'relational' elements that had grown around the concept of *Allâh* in the system of Jahiliyyah, Islam found some quite erroneous, incompatible with its new religious conception, and it fought strenuously against them and against those who upheld them. The chief of those objectionable elements was the idea that *Allâh*, although admittedly the supreme God, allowed of the existence of so-called "associates" *shurakâ* besides Him.

But apart from this polytheistic element and some other less important points, the Koran acknowledges that the general concept of *Allâh* entertained by the contemporary Arabs was surprisingly close to the Islamic concept of God. The Koran even wonders in a number of important verses why those people who have such a right understanding of God can be so obstinate in

refusing to admit the truth of the new teaching, as we shall see presently.

In considering the problem of the development among the pre-Islamic Arabs of the 'relational' meaning of the word *Allāh*, I think it is essential that we should distinguish between three different cases and examine the matter very carefully from the three different angles.

(I) The first is the pagan concept of Allāh, which is purely Arabian—the case in which we see the pre-Islamic Arabs themselves talking about "*Allāh*" as they understand the word in their own peculiar way. The interesting point is that pre-Islamic literature is not the only source of information we have at hand on the subject; full first-hand information is obtainable from an extremely vivid description of the actual situation given by the Koran itself.

(II) The case in which we observe the Jews and the Christians of pre-Islamic times using the very word *Allāh* in referring to their own God. In this case "*Allāh*" means of course the God of the Bible, a typically monotheistic concept of God. Exceedingly interesting examples are found in this respect, for instance, in the work of 'Adī b. Zayd, a well-known Arab Christian, the Court poet of al-Ḥīrah.

(III) Lastly, the case in which we see the pagan Arabs—non-Christian, non-Jewish pure Jahili Arabs—handling the Biblical concept of God under the name of "*Allāh*". This happens, for instance, when a Bedouin poet finds occasion, as he often does in Jahiliyyah, to compose a poem in praise of a Christian king, his patron. In such a case, he is using the word "*Allāh*", consciously or unconsciously, in the Christian sense and from the Christian point of view, despite the fact that he himself is a pagan. Quite apart from the problem as to how deep was the degree of the Arab understanding of the Christian concept of God in general, it is, I think undeniable that very often in such cases, particularly when the poet happened to be a man of keen intellectual curiosity like al-Nābighah and al-A'shā al-Akbar, or a man of a deep religious nature like Labīd, that considerable effort was exerted on their part, if not consciously and intentionally, at least unconsciously, to put themselves in a Christian position temporarily by a sort of empathy. And this empathic attitude, whether its core was a deep religious emotion or but a superficial understanding of a foreign belief, must have been powerful enough to influence the conception of God not only of the poet himself but more generally of his listeners, and thereby modify, in however slight and almost imperceptible a degree, the Arab concept of Allāh in the direction of monotheism.

- This last case is, as is easy to see, the most interesting and the most important

of the three. But it seems to have escaped the attention of those who have dealt with the problem of the influence of Christianity on pre-Islamic Arabia.

In any case, these three different ways of approach seem to have been gradually moving in the last years of Jahiliyyah towards a point of convergence; they were preparing the way for the coming of a new concept of Allāh, that of Islam. It will be well to recall in this connection that the Arabs, in the sixth and seventh centuries, were no longer living in primitive cultural conditions as one might be tempted to imagine. On the contrary, Arabia at that time was an open stage of lively cultural contact and international competition between peoples of ancient civilization, and the Arabs themselves were beginning to take an active part in this competition, as we shall see more in detail later.¹ Under such conditions, we should rather be greatly surprised if the concept of God among the Arabs remained just as it had been in the days of primitive paganism.

To the three cases we have just mentioned we may add one more case—an extremely special one—which remained to the last independent of and somewhat aloof from, the others until Islam arose and brought it suddenly into the brilliant light of history. I am thinking of the concept of Allāh peculiar to a very particular group of men in Jahiliyyah, known under the name of Ḥanīfs, and represented, in our case, by the poet Umayyah b. Abi al-Ṣalt, who, although he was neither a Jew nor a Christian, held religious ideas that were strikingly monotheistic in nature, and who must have made in many ways an important contribution to the permeation of Arabia by Jewish and Christian ideas. He was indeed an extraordinary figure in late Jahiliyyah. And the way he used the word *Allāh* is most interesting from the Islamic point of view.

II THE CONCEPT OF ALLAH IN ARABIAN PAGANISM

Let us now turn to the first of the four cases as distinguished above, that is, the autochthonous concept of God in pre-Islamic Arabia. I would begin by pointing out that even without having recourse to non-Koranic literature, that is, relying solely on the testimony of the Koran itself, we can ascertain

1) See chapter VII.

the very important fact that not only did the concept of Allāh exist in the religious view of the pre-Islamic Arabs, but, furthermore, the concept had already a well-developed inner structure of its own, namely:

- (1) Allāh in this conception is the Creator of the world.
- (2) He is the Giver of rain, i.e., more generally, the Giver of life to all living things on earth.
- (3) He is the One who presides over the most solemn oaths.
- (4) He is the object of what we might justly describe as "momentary" or "temporary" monotheism, the existence of which is evidenced by the recurring expression in the Koran "making (momentarily) their faith pure for Him alone"
- (5) Finally, Allāh is the *Lord of Ka'bah*.

These five fundamental points are discernible in the structure of the concept of Allāh in the Weltanschauung of Arabian paganism; this we know by the testimony of the Koran. And of course no stronger testimony could there be on this point. These are, roughly speaking, the major elements of the relational meaning attached to the word *Allāh* in Jahiliyyah, that the Koran did not find incompatible with its new religious conception. Here follows a brief explanation of these points.

As has been casually mentioned in the preceding section, the concept of Allāh that was prevalent among the pre-Islamic Arabs on the eve of the Islamic era was, in general, surprisingly close in nature to the Islamic one, so close, indeed, that the Koran sometimes even wonders why such a right understanding of God does not finally lead the disbelievers to acknowledging the truth of the new teaching.

In Sûrah al-'Ankabût, for example, we read:

وَلَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ، لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ .

"If you ask them (i.e. the pagan Arabs) 'Who has created the heavens and the earth, and has imposed law and order upon the sun and the moon?' They will surely answer, 'Allāh!'"²

And immediately following this passage.

وَلَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا ، لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ

"If you ask them 'Who sends down rain from the sky and revives there-

2) XXIX, v. 61.

with the earth after it has been dead?' They will surely answer, 'Allāh!'"³

Apparently, then, Allāh was, already in the conception of the pre-Islamic Arabs the Creator of the world and the Giver of rain, i.e., the Giver of life to all that exists on earth. The only serious complaint brought against them by the Kōran in this respect was that the pagans failed to draw the only reasonable conclusion from the acknowledgment of Allāh's being the Creator of the heaven and the earth: that they should serve Allāh alone and none else. The Koran expresses this sentiment by such phrases⁴ as "How, then, can they be turned aside (from the right direction)?" and "But most of them do not know how to exercise their intellect (i.e. how to draw the right conclusion)".

Even of greater interest than this in this respect is the fourth of the above-mentioned points. It is a singular phenomenon which I have called 'temporary monotheism', and which the Koran describes by a no less singular phrase: "making their religion sincere, or, pure, for Him, i.e., for Allāh alone".

In many passages of the Koran we are told that the pagan Arabs, when they find themselves in danger of death, with almost no hope of escape, particularly on the sea, call upon Allāh for help and "make their religion pure for Allāh". Only one example may suffice.⁵

وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَوَاجٌ كَالظَّلِيلِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

"And when waves enshroud them like dark clouds, they cry unto Allāh making their faith pure for Him alone".

It is indeed remarkable that this expression implies that in an emergency, when they really felt that their own life was in mortal danger, the pagan Arabs used to have recourse to 'temporary monotheism' apparently without any reflection on the grave implication of such an act. That the phrase "making one's religion pure for Allāh" in contexts of this kind means what we might call 'momentary—or temporary—monotheism', and not simply "sincerity" or "earnestness" in one's prayer⁶ is clearly shown by the fact that in the majority

3) XXIX, v. 63.

4) XXIX, (v. 63) بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (v. 62) أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ

5) XXXI, v. 31/32.

6) Of course this statement does not apply to a verse like the following, where the expression "making one's religion sincere" should be taken in its literal sense.

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ

"And they were commanded naught else than to serve God, making the religion pure for Him, as men of pure monotheism" (XCVIII, v. 4/5)

of the verses in which this expression is used the Koran adds the remark that these pagans, as soon as they reach the shore and feel sure of absolute safety, forget about all that has passed and begin again "to ascribe partners to Allāh", i.e., fall back into their original polytheism.

قَلْبًا تَجَاهُم إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذْ هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ

"But when He brings them safe to land, behold, they begin to ascribe partners".⁷

That the Jahili Arabs were prone to neglect the worship of Allāh in ordinary daily conditions, but were always reminded of His name whenever they found themselves in an unusual and serious situation is shown also by the fact that, according to the Koran, the most sacred and solemn oaths used to be sworn in Jahiliyyah in the name of Allāh.

وَأَنصَرُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْسَانِهِمْ

"And they swore by Allāh their most earnest oath".⁸

Of particular importance in determining the place occupied by Allāh in the Jahili system of concepts is the fact that He was considered the 'Lord of Ka'bah' the highest sanctuary of Central Arabia. This we can prove by ample evidence from pre-Islamic poetry, but nothing, of course, can be more decisive and authoritative than the Koran itself. In the very famous Sûrah *al-Quraysh* which is admittedly one of the oldest pieces of Revelation, the Quraysh are urged strongly to worship 'the Lord of this House',⁹ who causes the two annual caravans, in winter and summer, to be equipped, and takes good care of them with a view to making them live in peace and security. Here the idea of Allāh's being the Lord of Ka'bah is simply taken for granted as something natural and generally acknowledged. It suggests that at least the religiously more enlightened ones of the people of Mecca were conscious of worshipping Allāh at this shrine.

Allāh, in this particular capacity, was known among the pre-Islamic Arabs under the name of the "Lord of the House" (*Rabb al-bayt*), "Lord of Ka'bah" (*Rabb al-Ka'bah*) or "Lord of Mecca" (*Rabb Makkah*). Pre-Islamic literature furnishes ample evidence to show that the conception of Allāh as the Lord of the Meccan sanctuary was exceedingly wide-spread among the Arabs even out-

7) XXIX, 65.

8) XXXV, v. 40/42, also XVI, v. 40/38.

9) CVI, vv. 1-3 تَلْبِثُوا رَبَّ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ

side the narrow confines of the town of Mecca. Here I give one of the most interesting examples. The following is a verse by the very famous pre-Islamic Christian poet of al-Ḥīrah, 'Adī b. Zayd. The verse is in one of his odes which he composed in the prison into which he had been thrown by the King al-Nu'mān III.

سَعَى الْأَعْدَاءُ لَا يَأْلُونَ شَرًّا * عَلَى ، وَرَبِّ مَكَّةَ وَالْمَلِيبِ

The poet complains to the king saying that the malignant slanderers did everything they could do in order to sow discord between him and the king.

"The enemies tried hard against me", he says, "without desisting from doing anything that could harm me, by the Lord of Mecca and the Crucified".¹⁰

In this verse 'Adī b. Zayd claims his complete innocence and says that the misunderstanding on the part of the king has been produced only by the machination of the slanderers envious of his good fortune, and in order to give special weight to this declaration he swears by the Lord of Mecca and Christ putting together the two "Lords" into a single oath.

What is important to remember regarding this verse is that the poet 'Adī b. Zayd was an Arab Christian, but he was neither a simple Arab nor an ordinary Christian. He was a man of the highest culture of his age. He was brought up and educated in a high Persian society at the time when the Sassanian culture was at its apogee under Kisrā Anūshirwān; he occupied a high official position, went to Constantinople in the capacity of a diplomat, so to speak, when the Emperor Tiberius II was at the head of Byzantium and came to know Christianity more deeply at this big center of Christianity. And as an Arab poet, he was justly regarded as the greatest of the whole tribe of Tamīm.

The fact that this man of highest culture and education put in one of his solemn oaths the Lord of Mecca and Christ together is significant, in my view, in two different ways: it is of importance, first of all, in connection with the problem of the relational meaning of the word *Allāh* in its purely Arabian aspect. That a highly educated Christian, not a pagan Arab, living in Ḥīrah, away from Mecca, did use this concept of the Lord of Ka'bah in this way shows

10) Many people would feel inclined to translate the last word in the verse *ṣalīb* as "Cross", not "Crucified" as I have done. I prefer my interpretation because it makes the expression livelier and more colorful in that it places two different "Lords"—Christ and Allāh—side by side. If we adopt the alternative interpretation, the reference to Christ becomes slightly less direct and the expression seems to lose thereby the nakedness, so to speak, and become less forcible. In either case, however, the general meaning remains exactly the same.

better than anything else how wide-spread and influential was this particular connotation of Allāh.

But it is also significant, and perhaps even more significant—albeit more delicate and subtle—in connection with the second case as distinguished above, that is, the problem of the purely Christian conception of Allāh that was prevalent among the Arab Christians of that age.

The example of 'Adī b. Zayd's verse would seem to suggest, at least to my mind, that there was in the Christian psychology an unconscious tendency or inclination towards identifying their Christian concept of Allāh with the purely pagan Arabian concept of Allāh as the Lord of the Meccan shrine. I would not say: a complete identification, but at least the first step towards it, i.e., a non-incompatibility between the two. Otherwise the expression would have been merely a most strange and bizzar combination of ideas.

And if this understanding of mine is right, then perhaps we might say with some confidence that this kind of attitude on the part of the Arab Christians must have played an extremely important role in the development of a lofty and spiritualized concept of God among the pagan Arabs themselves.

However this may be, we do not have to attach so much importance exclusively to this very particular problem of the partial identification of Allāh the Lord of Ka'bah and Allāh the Christian God. More generally, the very fact that the Christians—and the Jews, for that matter—used the same word *Allāh* in reference to their Biblical God, this fact alone must have been very influential on the religious development of the conception of the pre-Islamic Arabs, particularly so in the case of those of the more enlightened type represented by poets like al-Nābighah, al-A'shā al-Akbar and Labid, those Arabs, that is, who although pagan, had a good first-hand knowledge of the Christians and the Jews, their creed and their custom, a knowledge they owed to their close personal contact with them. This last point will be dealt with in more detail a few paragraphs later. In any case, the verse we have just examined will serve as an excellent introduction to our next topic which is presented by the case in which we see the word *Allāh* used by the Jews and Christians according to their own conception of God.

III THE JEWS AND THE CHRISTIANS

The main problem of this section need not be dealt with at length in view of the fact that the general cultural situation of the Jews and the Christians in Jahiliyyah is a matter of common knowledge among the Orientalists. I shall restrict myself to some points of direct relevance to the topic of the present chapter.¹¹

In those days, the Arabs lived surrounded closely by great Christian powers. Abyssinia, to begin with, was Christian; the Abyssinians were Monophysites. The Byzantine empire, whose high civilization was greatly admired by the Arabs was of course Christian. The dynasty of Ghassân who served as a kind of outpost in Arabia for the Greek Emperors of Constantinople was Christian, from the second king 'Amr I, famous for having built the monasteries of Ḥālī, Ayyūb, and Ḥannād, down to the close of the dynasty in A.D. 637, when the last king Jabalah II was dethroned by the Muslim conquerors. The Ghassanids, too, were Monophysites.

Al-Ḥīrah, on the other hand, which was the Persian vassal-state and which exercised a great influence on the life and conception of even the desert Arabs, was, as is well-known, an important center of the East Syrian, i.e., Nestorian, Church. And as a result of their direct contact with these big centers of Christianity, some of the big nomadic tribes were in the process of Christianization. Furthermore, as noted above, many of the Arab intellectuals of the age had a considerable knowledge of Christianity. The great poet al-Nābighah is an outstanding example. Another great poet of Jahiliyyah, al-A'shā al-Akbar had an intimate personal contact with the Bishops of Najrān, and his knowledge of Christianity was far from being a superficial one, as his *Diwān* shows clearly and conclusively.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the people of Mecca remained entirely uninfluenced by such a situation, if only for the reason that they, as professional merchants, travelled on business so often to these Christian centers. Besides, in Mecca itself, there were also Christians, not only Christian slaves, but Christians of the clan of Banū Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā.

As to the Jews, quite a number of Jewish tribes had settled in Arabia.

11) For a more detailed survey of the whole problem, see, for instance Carlo Nallino, "Ebrei e Cristiani nell' Arabia Preislamica" (*Raccolta di Scritti*, vol. III), to which I myself am deeply indebted.

Yathrib, Khaibar, Fadak, Taymâ', and Wadi al-Qurà being some of the most important centers settled by immigrant Jews or Jewish proselytes. And although in Mecca there seems to have been practically no Jew, the Meccans must have been familiar with some at least of the basic ideas and concepts of Judaism.

Both the Jews and the Christians in Arabia used Arabic as their vernacular, and, as I have pointed out earlier, referred to their Biblical God by the very word *Allāh*, which was something quite natural seeing that the 'basic' meaning conveyed by this word was a very abstract one that would correspond roughly to the Greek *ho theos*. This conceivably provided a good opportunity for the convergence of the two different concepts of God into a certain kind of unity, albeit a very vague one, in the Jahili minds.

In general, Judeo-Christian religious concepts were, so to speak, in the air at that time, ready to influence both sides, I mean, both the Jahili Arabs and the Jews and Christians in their understanding of the position of each other. This is clearly reflected in many important traditions. I will take up here one of them as an interesting example. It is a famous tradition about Waraqah b. Naufal connected with Muhammad's first appearance on the stage of history as Prophet and Messenger of God. Al-Bukhārī records it in his chapter on "How Revelation began to visit the Prophet"¹² in his Hadith collection. The story runs like this:

When the very first Revelation "Recite in the name of thy Lord who created"¹³ came to the Prophet in a very strange and awe-inspiring form, the Prophet who had never experienced such a thing before, naturally got panic-stricken. He lost all self-confidence; he was uneasy, nervous, and distressed. In short he himself did not know how he should understand this strange experience.

His wife Khadijah not only reassured him, but sought stronger reassurance for him from an authority. This authority was her cousin, the very famous Waraqah b. Naufal b. Asad. Here is the text of the main part of the story as it has been handed down to us by al-Bukhārī:¹⁴

12) كَذَلِكَ كَانَ بَدَأَ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ Hadith No. 3.

13) اقْرَأْ بِسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

14) فَانطَلَقْتُ بِهِ خَدِيجَةَ حَتَّى أَتَتْ بِهِ وَرَقَةَ بْنَ نَوْفَلٍ بْنِ أَسَدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ
ابْنَ عَمِّ خَدِيجَةَ وَكَانَ أَمْرًا تَنْصُرُ فِي الْبَاهِلِيَةِ وَكَانَ يَكْتُبُ الْكُتُبَ الْيَمَانِيَةَ فَيَكْتُبُ
مِنَ الْإِنْجِيلِ بِالْيَمَانِيَةِ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ وَكَانَ شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا قَدْ عَمِيَ فَقَالَتْ لَهُ

"Then she (i.e. Khadijah) took him to Waraqah b. Naufal b. Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzzà, her cousin. Now this man who had been converted to Christianity in the days of paganism was thoroughly conversant with Hebrew¹⁵ and had made a copy of a considerable portion of the Evangel in Hebrew. He was at that time a very old man and had already lost his eyesight. Khadijah said, 'O my cousin, listen to the son of your brother'.¹⁶ Waraqah asked him, 'Son of my brother, what have you seen?' Thereupon the Apostle of God told him about what he saw. Waraqah said, 'This is precisely the *nāmūs* that was once sent down to Mūsà b. 'Imràn (i.e. Moses). Would that I were young in (your days of prophethood)! Would that I might be still alive when your tribe will expel you!' The Apostle of God asked, 'Will they really expel me?' 'Yes', he replied, 'no man ever brought what you have brought now without being treated as an enemy. If I could live until the day when you will be expelled,¹⁷ I would support you with all my might!'"

There is no positive reason for doubting the authenticity of this tradition; on the contrary, the very occurrence of the word *nāmūs*, which is evidently non-Koranic, instead of the common Koranic term *Tawrāt* (Torah) argues very strongly for its authenticity and genuineness. The word *nāmūs*, which is indeed the pivotal point of the story, is clearly the Greek word *nomos* for "law" i.e. the exact equivalent of the Hebrew *Tôrâ*.

In any case, the story tells us that Waraqah who was well-known for his Christian religion and his good knowledge of Hebrew scripture, as soon as he heard from Muhammad what had happened to him, identified this apparently strange experience of Muhammad as something authentic belonging to the tradition of the Judeo-Christian monotheism. And this identification, to all appearance, gave confidence to Muhammad's mind.

All the preceding consideration would seem to lead us towards the only

خديجة يا ابن عمّ استمع من ابن أخيك فقال له ورقة يا ابن أخى ماذا قرأ
فأخبره رسول الله خبر ما رأى فقال له ورقة هذا التاموس الذى نزل الله على
موسى يا ليتنى فيها نبأ لى أكون سحياً إذ يخرجك قومك فقال رسول الله
وأخرجني هم قال نعم لم يأت رجل قط بشئ ما جئت به إلا عوينى وإن
يبرئنى يئومك أنصرك نصرًا مؤزرًا .

15) Literally: he could write the Hebrew writing.

16) In addressing her old cousin, she made Muhammad "cousin of Waraqah" in order to show respect to the latter.

17) Literally: if your day reaches me.

reasonable—to my mind at least—conclusion that by the time Islam arose in Mecca, a considerably lofty conception of Allāh had already been developed among the Arabs, or *was* developing gradually, as a converging point of two originally different concepts of God. On the one hand, the Arabian paganism had been gradually developing the concept of Allāh, as the Creator of the heaven and the earth, the Giver of rain which causes the earth to produce all the good things for the benefit of mankind, the Mighty God who watches over the sacredness of oaths, the Founder of some of the old religious customs,¹⁸ and the Great Lord (*Rabb*) having the whole world in his hand.¹⁹ For this much we have the undeniable testimony of the Koran itself. And there is no cogent reason to deny that all this was part of the autochthonous religion of Arabian paganism, although this was evidently only the highest and best part of this religion.

On the other hand, the monotheistic concept of God was spreading steadily among the Arabs, who, if they did not accept it as a matter of personal belief and faith, must have been at least well aware of the existence of some such concept of God among their neighbors and must have been quite familiar with it.

IV THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF ALLAH IN THE HANDS OF THE PAGAN ARABS

In the last two sections we have examined, first, the purely pagan concept of Allāh, and then, the Judeo-Christian concept of Allāh. We have seen how these two were gradually tending to converge into one in the latter years of Jahiliyyah. There was also something very important which served, as it were, as a bridge between the two shores. And with this we turn to the third case as distinguished above, namely, the case in which the Arabs, that is, the pagan Arabs who professed neither Christianity nor Judaism, had to talk about the latter, had to refer in their talk to things pertaining to these monotheistic religions. And, we might safely surmise seeing the general cultural situation of

18) IV, v. 139 ff.

19) XXIII, vv. 88-91/86-89.

the time, such cases must have occurred not infrequently. Although we have no faithful contemporary records of what the Arabian people were saying among themselves on these matters, we find at least some interesting evidences in the work of the poets, particularly of those who used to compose in praise of their patrons, whether Christian kings of Ḥīrah or of Ghassân.

And this is even far more important still than those cases in which we see the Christians and the Jews using the word *Allāh* in reference to their God, because after all that is, in itself, something natural, too natural to give us any valuable clue to anything of real importance.

The case is quite different when, for example, al-Nābighah, a simple Bedouin poet, addressing the Christian king of al-Ḥīrah, al-Nu'māh b. al-Mundhir, and singing in praise of the latter, uses the word *Allāh* in this way:

وَرَبَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ ضَمِيرٍ * وَكَانَ لَهُ عَلَى الْبَرِيَّةِ نَاصِرٌ

"Allāh has completed upon him the best of his favors and let him gain victory and power over mankind".²⁰

This Lakhmī prince al-Nu'mān, widely known as Abū Qābūs, whose reign fell roughly between 580 A.D. and 602 A.D., was a Christian who had been brought up in the Christian family of the very famous Zayd, the father of the poet 'Adī b. Zayd whom we have just met. So when the poet al-Nābighah uses the word *Allāh* in saying that the king owes his wonderful prosperity, wealth and power to the great favor of *Allāh*, he must naturally mean by this the Christian God. At least this must be his intention.

We have a confirmatory evidence in another verse by the same poet. Al-Nābighah, having lost the royal favor of al-Nu'mān, went to Ghassân and was warmly welcomed and honored there by King 'Amr b. al-Ḥārith al-Aṣghar, and began composing panegerics on this new patron and his family, known today under the name of "Ghassân encomia" *Ghassāniyyāt*. In one of the most famous *Ghassāniyyāt*, we find the following two verses that are far more interesting for our purpose than the one I have just quoted:²¹

لَهُمْ شَيْعَةٌ لَمْ يُعْطِهَا اللَّهُ غَيْرَهُمْ * مِنَ الْجُودِ وَالْأَحْلَامِ غَيْرِ عَوَازِبِ
مَجْلَسُهُمْ ذَاتُ الْإِلَهِ وَدِينُهُمْ * قَوْمٌ فَمَا يَرْجُونَ غَيْرَ الْعَوَاقِبِ

Here in praise of the Christian Ghassân he says, "They have a nature, like of which Allāh has never given to any other man, that is, generosity accom-

20) *Diwān al-Nābighah*, Beirut, 1953, p. 88, v. 4.

21) *Diwān* p. 16, vv. 2-3.

panied by sound judgement that never deserts them. Their Scripture²² is that of God (*al-Ilāh*, the original form of *Allāh*), and their faith is steadfast²³ and their hope is set solely on the world to come".²⁴

This phenomenon is of particular relevance to our present topic in two important ways.

(1) When the poet used the word *Allāh* in this way—and, we must remember, he did not do it only once, but very frequently—something must have occurred in his psychology. It may have been, in the beginning, simply a slight change of nuance or a slight shift of view-point; in any case, something of no small consequence to his religious outlook must have been growing in his mind. For it is difficult to imagine that this way of using the word *Allāh* did not exercise, unconsciously if not consciously, any influence on his image of God particularly when it repeated itself so often. And this, again, may very well have cast its reflection on his conception of Allāh even when he was using the same word in reference to the non-Christian, purely Arabian God.

(2) Equally important is the fact that in Jahiliyyah the social position of the poet was very high. The words uttered by a poet, especially a well-known great poet, were feared, venerated or loved according to cases as a real spiritual force; and they had all the weight of a valuable social, or even sometimes national, asset. Poetry at that time was not a simple matter of personal expression of thoughts and emotions. It was a public phenomenon in the full sense of the word.

Impressive words uttered by a famous poet were propagated immediately within the tribe and beyond the tribe to the corners of the Arab world, "flying faster than an arrow" as they said. The poets were literally leaders of the public opinion.

So the fact that a great poet like al-Nābighah used the word *Allāh* in the Christian acceptance, putting himself, at least at that very moment, in a Christian position by empathy, should not be taken as a mere matter of personal liking or inclination. On the contrary, it must have influenced in an indirect and unconscious way the religious outlook of his pagan contemporaries. It must have taught them how to understand the word *Allāh* in its Biblical acceptance; more important still, it must have, further, induced them gradually to identify almost unconsciously their own pagan concept of God with that of the Christians.

22) *majallatu-hum*; var. *maḥallatu-hum* "their home is God's own land."

23) Or, "their religion (*din*) is right."

24) Or, reading *khayra* instead of *ghayra*, "what they wish for is the best of the ultimate end, i.e., Hereafter."

V ALLAH OF THE ḤANĪFS

Let us now turn to the fourth and the last variety according to our classification, i.e., the conception of Allāh peculiar to a group of people known as Ḥanīfs,²⁵ the pre-Islamic monotheists. The word *ḥanīf* is an extremely problematic one. Its etymology still remains obscure, and consequently its 'basic' meaning is very hard to define in a final way.²⁶ But the problem in itself, however interesting, is of comparatively small relevance to us as far as concerns our present topic. What concerns us at this stage is the singularly monotheistic—we might almost say, Koranic—conception of Allāh entertained by the people of this category. Let it suffice to remark that in the Koran the word *ḥanīf*—which is used many times, particularly in the Medinan Sûrahs—means "monotheist" in sharp contradistinction to the "polytheists" or "idol-worshippers"²⁷ (*mushrikûn*). The word is associated with the name of Abraham "who was a *Ḥanīf*, and neither a Jew nor a Christian, one who did not belong to the idol-worshippers".²⁸ In an important passage,²⁹ it is declared that this pure monotheistic belief symbolized by the name of Abraham is "the true religion", "the natural predisposition (*fiṭrah*) to which God predisposed (*faṭara*) mankind"

Among all those pre-Islamic Arabs who are known as Ḥanīfs Umayyah b. Abi al-Ṣalt presents an unusually important case, because he was a very famous poet of the tribe of Thaqīf in Ṭā'if, and a considerable number of poems have been handed down to us under his name. Besides, Islamic Tradition, (Hadith), has also shown a lively concern for this man, because of his very particular relation with the Prophet Muhammad, so that his life is known tolerably well, at least better than any other Ḥanīfs. He is, in this sense, not a dark mystery like other Ḥanīfs; he stands to a certain degree in the daylight of history.

As regards the poems that have been handed down to us, there is of course the big problem of genuineness. The problem is particularly delicate in his case because his words and ideas bear so close a resemblance to the Koranic ones.

25) Arabic *ḥanīf*, pl. *ḥunafā'*.

26) See Charles Lyall, "The Words *Ḥanīf* and Muslim" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1903, pp. 771 ff.

27) For instance, III, v. 60/67; III, v. 89/95; XXII, v. 32/31, etc., etc.

28) XXX, 29/30.

29) II, v. 129/135; III, v. 60/67.

Many of the poems attributed to him must be spurious.³⁰ But even supposing that half of them are non-genuine, there is no reason to doubt the genuineness of them as a whole, unless we take the absurd view that all the Muslims who made reference to this poet from the Prophet Muhammad himself down to the scholars of the Abbasid age were having a nightmare and talking in delirium strange things about him that did not correspond to any historical reality.

Besides, even the forged part must contain a modicum of truth in it, for in cases like this, one cannot forge without having before one's eyes a real model for copying, that is, some reality on which to base one's forgery. So even the forged poems must reflect in a peculiar way the original thought and ideas of this poet.

This man Umayyah b. Abi al-Şalt is indeed an extraordinary figure in the whole Jahili literature. He was one of the leading personalities of the tribe of Thaġif, and according to Abû 'Ubaydah, the greatest poet of the tribe. In Jahiliyyah he was said to be in search of the true monotheistic religion, away from all idol-worship, but he remained an isolated dissenter without being converted to Judaism nor to Christianity. And yet the spiritual atmosphere in which he lived was almost completely Christian and Jewish, particularly the latter; and the Christian and Jewish elements he assimilated were mainly of Yemenite origin.

He is reported to have studied Hebrew and Syriac seriously and read those parts of the Holy Scripture that were available to him at that time in these languages; this is partly corroborated by the existence of a great number of Hebrew and Syriac words in his verses, which struck the philologists of the Abbasid period as extremely strange, so much so that, as Ibn Qutaybah says, of all the Jahili poets he was considered to be the only one whose poems could not be used as *hujjah* "evidence" in interpreting the Koran "because of this defect" i.e. "because of the abundance of strange words" (*kalimât gharibah*) he used.

According to tradition he wore always sack-cloth or coarse hair-cloth (*masûh*) as a mark of a man wholly devoted to worship—he was predecessor of the later Sûfis in this respect—declared wine to be unlawful (*ĥarâm*), called the religion he was in search of *dîn al-ĥanîfah* "the religion of Ĥanîf" and associated it with Abraham (Ibrâhîm) and Ishmael (Ismâ'îl).

30) Friedrich Schulthess. "Umajja b. Abi-ş-Şalt", *Orientalische Studien*, Theodor Nöldeke, Giessen, 1906, vol. I, pp. 71-89. The same scholar published later a critical edition of the poems attributed to this poet, 1911, Leipzig, from which I draw material for the following description of his ideas.

So far so good. But here begins that aspect of his which induced the Muslims to call him an "enemy of God" (*'aduww Allāh*). He is said to have been firmly convinced that a "prophet" (*nabi*) would be raised among the Arabs, and that he himself would be that person. According to one tradition he held the view that after Jesus Christ there would be six appearances of "prophethood" (*muburwah*); already five occasions had passed and there remained only one and the last chance, and he was expecting the choice to fall upon him.

Whether this is true or not, when Muhammad appeared as the Prophet of the Arabs, Umayyah got furiously angry or dissatisfied, or perhaps both, and began his campaign against Islam. He instigated greatly the Quraysh of Mecca to oppose him, and some poems have been handed down to us which he composed bewailing the pagans killed in the battle of Uhud. Among them there were two of his own maternal cousins, 'Utbah and Shaybah, and he urged his tribesmen to take revenge upon Muhammad for their blood. And afterwards he fled to Yemen, his spiritual home.

He did not change to the last this inimical attitude towards Prophet of Islam, and on his death-bed he is related to have said:

"This illness will inevitably cause my death. I know that the religion of *ḥanīf* is true, but I cannot help entertaining a doubt as regards Muhammad".³¹

As regards his poems themselves we should say that they disclose a very strange and even grotesque vision of the universe. Of course when we look at it from the Islamic point of view, there is nothing strange and bizarre in his poetic vision, but when we look at it against the background of the normal mentality of the Jahili Arab, we understand why even in his lifetime he was already beginning to be enshrouded in a cloud of myths and legends. His world is a dark forest of Jewish imagery; a unique world of Jewish fantasmagoria.

This world is also theocentric. There is One and only one personal God at the center of this world and He presides over everything existent. Around the image of this God, whom of course he calls Allāh, there appear before our eyes apocalyptic pictures of His abode and His kingdom. He is sitting on his

31) هُوَ الرَّمَقَةُ مَيْيِي ، وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ الْعَيْنِيَّةَ حَقٌّ ، وَلَكِنَّ الشَّكَّ يَبْأَخِيئِي فِي مُحَمَّدٍ (31)

Throne³² "alone and unique"³³ envelopped in a dazzling veil of light.³⁴

No human sight can penetrate through this veil of light and go up to the Divine Presence. The veil of light is surrounded by the heavenly host of angels whom he sometimes calls "strengthened creatures",³⁵ i.e., creatures made strong and powerful by Divine assistance; they are "arranged in lines", some of them carrying the Throne, some of them silently listening to Divine Revelation;³⁶ among them Jibril, i.e. Gabriel and Mikâl, i.e., Michael and some others occupy the highest places.

Then the Biblical stories of creation are told. The present life which we on earth are living is called *dunyâ* and its essential ephemerality is emphasized: nothing remains for ever; every living being must sooner or later become worn out and perish³⁷ except the only One who remains eternally, the Holy One, possessor of Majesty.³⁸

Then comes an exhortation to the true monotheistic religion which he calls "Ḥanīfītic religion" (*dīn al-ḥanīfah*); the only right way for man to take in this transient world is to stop following his blind desire (*hawâ*)³⁹ and to follow the Divine guidance (*hudâ*).⁴⁰ But, he says, the human mind is so made that it is naturally inclined towards "turning away from the truth"⁴¹ like "a blind man who goes deviating from the right path".⁴²

The ultimate end of all this is the Last Judgment. And here we have an abundance of eschatological concepts stemming from the Bible. Hell and Paradise are minutely described. All the sinners are brought up naked to the place of judgment and are thrown into the "ocean of fire",⁴³ bound with long

32) مَلِكٌ عَلَى عَرْشِ السَّمَاءِ "the great king sitting on the Throne of Heaven"

33) قَدْرٌ مَوْحَدٌ

34) حِجَابُ الثَّوَرِ

35) خَلْقٌ مَوْحَدٌ

36) الرُّوحِ

37) يَفْنَى وَيَبْلَى

38) سَيِّدِ الْبَاقِي الْمُقَدَّسِ فِي الْجَلَالِ

39) هَوَى

40) الْهُدَى

41) التَّصَدُّ عَنْ الْحَقِّ

42) كَالْأَعْمَى الْمَيِّطِ فِي الْهَيْئَةِ

43) بَحْرُ النَّارِ

chains and crying "Woe is me! Woe is me!", while those who have been god-fearing⁴⁴ (*muttaqûna*) are richly rewarded with the abode of blissful life,⁴⁵ under the cool shadow of trees.

This is, in broad and simple outlines, the picture of the world which Umayyah b. Abî al-Ṣalt presents to our imagination. Even supposing, as I said above, that half of this picture were a forgery yet the animating spirit of the original Weltanschauung and its constituents are not at all difficult to grasp through it.

As to the Ḥanîfîtic conception of Allâh, we may observe that according to this poet, He is the "God of the whole world",⁴⁶ the "Creator"⁴⁷ of everything, and all creatures are "his servants".

هُوَ اللَّهُ بَارِي الْخَلْقِ وَالْخَلْقُ كُلُّهُمْ * إِمَاءٌ لَهُ طَوْعًا جَبِيمًا وَأَعْبُدُ

"He is Allâh, the Creator of everything, and all the created things serve Him willingly as faithful servants". That is to say, He is the Lord (*rabb*) of His servants.⁴⁸

He is the Great King of the heavens and the earth,⁴⁹ who reigns over his subjects with absolute sovereignty. This majestic aspect of Allâh is referred to by one of the "strange words"—*al-kalimât al-gharibah*, as Ibn Qutaybah called them—that have greatly vexed the commentators and lexicologists of the Abbasid period. The word in question is *salîṭat*, originally a Syriac word, which occurs in the oft-quoted verse:

إِنَّ الْأَنَامَ رَعَايَا اللَّهِ كُلُّهُمْ * هُوَ السَّلِيطُ قَوْقَ الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَطِرٌ

"All men are Allâh's subjects; He is the Absolute Sovereign, on earth, Omnipotent".⁵⁰

44) الْمُتَّقُونَ from *taqwa*, see below, chapter IX, section II.

45) دَارُ عَيْشٍ نَاعِمٍ

46) إِلَهُ الْعَالَمِينَ

47) الْخَالِقِ

48) رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ This corresponds to the Lord-servant relation between God and man, that we are going to discuss in chapter VIII.

49) تِلْكَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَأَرْضِهَا

50) Since those who handed down this verse and commented on the word were not sure even of this form, let alone its meaning, several variants have come into being: *al-silṭat* السِّلْطَةُ *al-siltit* السِّلْطِيتُ. In Ibn Qutaybah's *al-shi'r wa-l-shu'arâ* gives *al-saltat* السَّلْطَاتُ

And, most important of all, He is Unique, absolutely One.

وَمَنْ لَمْ تُنَارِعْهُ الْخَلَائِقُ مُلْكُهُ * وَإِنْ لَمْ تُغَرِّدْهُ الْيَبَادُ فَمَنْزِلُهُ

"One with whom no one of the creatures ever disputes the kingdom, He is the One who stands alone without peers, even if His servants (i.e. men) do not make Him one, (that is, worship besides him other gods and idols)".

Such is his conception of Allāh. As far as these points are concerned, we see that the Ḥanīfītic conception of God has absolutely nothing contradictory and incompatible with the Islamic one.

In any case, the very existence in Jahiliyyah of a man like Umayyah b. Abî al-Ṣalt would seem to be a striking indication that religious ideas resembling those of Islam were existent among the pre-Islamic Arabs, and that concepts characteristic of a spiritual religion were not at all unknown and alien to their minds, at least in the period just preceding the rise of Islam. This makes it also understandable why the Koran attached the new Islamic movement to the Ḥanīfītic tradition. This is the positive side of the matter.

But it has also a negative side. While the positive side concerns the similarity between the Ḥanīfs and the Koran, the negative side relates to the essential difference between the two. Referring to "the immense difference" between the Koran and the production of Umayyah ibn Abî al-Ṣalt, Sir Hamilton Gibb remarks:⁵¹ "This is the vibrant moral tone that permeates it."⁵² While the poems may echo the same moral lesson, there is nothing of the urgency and passion of the Qur'ānic presentation. However vivid and sensuous Umayyah's descriptions (of Paradise and Hell, for example) may have been, they do not seem to have had any marked effect upon his fellow-citizens of Ṭā'if, let alone the Meccans. Similar materials presumably circulated among other monotheistic circles and in other parts of Arabia, and of course take their place within the total content of the Qur'ān. But what gave them their effect in their Qur'ānic presentation was that they were linked up with the essential moral core of its teaching".

We should remark, too, that the so-called *ḥanifiyyah* was not a strongly organized spiritual group movement. These people stood each one of them alone and isolated in the pagan society. Their aim was strictly restricted to personal salvation, and not the salvation of other people, much less of mankind

51) Sir Hamilton A. R. Gibb, "Pre-Islamic Monotheism in Arabia", *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. LV, Number 4, 1962, p. 280.

52) i.e. the Koran.

at large. In short, they were only isolated, exceptional figures. And in this sense, the religious Weltanschauung of Umayyah of which we have just had a glimpse was presumably much less influential in determining the general atmosphere of pagan Arabia than the vague and more general influence exercised directly by the Christians and the Jews. In any case his world-view did not represent the dominant note of the Jahili spirituality. On the contrary, there is evidence to show that it was regarded by the pagan masses as something quite fantastic and bizarre. This we can see from the way the Meccan people reacted in general to the monotheism and eschatology of Islam as presented by the Koran.

However it seems to be also certain that the activity of a man like Umayyah contributed considerably towards making the apocalyptic and eschatological ideas somewhat known to the pagan Arabs, who, although finding them quite repelling and absurd, must have at least come to know that there were around them a few queer people who entertained such strange ideas.

Keeping in mind the main points we have just examined, let us go back to the problem that was raised in the first part of this chapter concerning the way in which the Koran presented the Islamic concept of Allâh to the pagan auditors. I think we are now in a somewhat better position to understand why the Koran, whenever it mentions the name of Allâh, does not show any sign of hesitation or apprehension, any sign, that is, of offering something quite alien and unknown to the hearers. On the contrary it urges the pagan Arabs to be more strictly consistent in their belief in Allâh, and blames them for being logically so inconsistent. In addition to the examples already adduced, we may quote, for instance:

قُلْ لِّمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ . سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ . قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

"Say: 'Whose is the earth and whoever is in it, if you have the capacity to understand rightly?' They will say: 'Allâh's'. Say: 'Will you not then remember?' (i.e. will you still refuse to come to your senses and awake to the Truth which is already there in your hearts in a latent form?)"⁵³

This expression "Will you not then remember?" (*a-fa-lâ tadhakkarûna*), like a similar one which is also very often used "Will you not exercise your intellect" (*a-fa-lâ ta'qilûna*), implies, in contexts of this kind, blaming and reproaching the pagans for being unable to draw, or perhaps even being unwill-

53) XXIII, vv. 86-87/84-85.

ing to draw, the final and most important conclusion about Allāh despite the fact that they have already such a right understanding of His nature.

The next passage is even more explicit on this point.⁵⁴

قُلْ مَنْ يَدِيرُ مَلَكُوتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ يُعِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ .
سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ . قُلْ فَأَنَّى تُنْحَرُونَ

“Say: ‘In whose hand is the supreme dominion over all things and He protects while against Him no one can protect anybody, if you know?’ They will say: ‘Allāh’s’. Say: ‘How then are you bewitched?’”

We should notice this last forcible expression “How then are you bewitched?”. It expresses surprise at the sight of the people who know and acknowledge that Allāh has in His hand the supreme dominion over the whole world of being, and yet do not worship Him as He should be. Their attitude is not understandable unless you suppose them all to be bewitched.

Such an argument would lose its point completely if we do not suppose that the Koran assumes from the outset in those to whom Muhammad is to convey the Divine message at least some vague conception of Allāh, which, although quite erroneous in many essential points from the standpoint of Islam, contains also a number of good and right elements that are quite acceptable. It is remarkable that the Koran, far from combating the latter, tries to make these elements more precise and impressive by force of logic.

CHAPTER V

ONTOLOGICAL RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

I THE CONCEPT OF CREATION

In a religious or philosophical *Weltanschauung*, the being and existence of man forms as a general rule the major problem. The eternal and ever recurring question: Where does man come from? What is the source of his very being here in the world? This is one of those basic problems that have always disquieted the human mind. In the Koranic conception, the right answer—and the only right one—to this question is not far to seek: the source of being is God Himself; existence is conferred upon man by God as a gratuitous gift. In other words, there is, between God and man, a fundamental relation of creator and creature in this part of the Koranic *Divina Commedia*, Allâ plays the role of the Giver of being and existence to man. He is the Creator of man, and man is nothing but his creature. Indeed, Allâh is the Creator of the whole world, ranging from the angels above (XLIII, 18/19), Jinn (LV, 14/15), the heavens and the earth (XIV, 22/19, etc.), the sun and the moon, the day and the night (XLI, 37, etc.), to the mountains and the rivers (XIII, 3, etc.), trees, fruits, grain and herbs (LV, 10–11/11–12, etc.), and all kinds of animals, “some of them going upon their bellies, some of them going upon two feet, some, again, going upon four” (XXIV, 44/45). There will be no end if we go on enumerating what He has created. He is, in short, the “Creator of everything”.¹ And man is only one of these created things, albeit the most important one. In fact, the Koran may be regarded in a certain sense as a grand hymn in honor of Divine Creation. At any rate, the whole Koran is literally impregnated with the thought of Creation and a feeling of profound admiration for it.

1. ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ “This then is Allâh your Lord.
There is no god save Him, the Creator of everything”. (VI, v. 102)

In the preceding chapter, we have seen that the concept itself of Divine Creation was not at all unknown to the pre-Islamic Arabs, and also that this concept seems to have been usually associated with the name of Allāh. This association between "creation" (*khalq*) and "Allāh", however, was not always and necessarily firm and definite. For the Koran tells us that there were some idol-worshippers who attributed this power of creation to the idols.

أَمْ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ خَلَقُوا كَخَلْقِهِ فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ . قُلِ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ

"Or do they assign to Allāh associates who have [allegedly] created just as He has created, so that the creative activity of both seems alike to them? Say: 'Allāh is the Creator of everything, and He is the One, the Almighty'."²

But this was presumably only an exceptional case. In more normal cases, the creative activity was to all appearance ascribed to the highest God, Allāh. And often, in Jahiliyyah literature, we are surprised to meet with the concept of Divine Creation which is exceedingly close to the Koranic one—unless, of course, we explain away all such cases as forgeries and interpolations. In the following verse, for instance, the concept of creation is associated with that of "Lord" (*rabb*). The poet is 'Antarah.³

فَيَا طَيْرَ الْأَرَاكِ بِعَقِّي رَبِّ * بَرَاكَ عَسَاكَ تَعْلَمُ أَيْنَ حَلُّوا

"O bird, perching on the *arāk*-tree, by a Lord who has created you, you must surely know where they (i.e. my beloved ones) dwell now".

It is significant that the expression of "a Lord who created a bird" is here used in an oath-formula.⁴ Still more Koranic is the thought expressed by the same poet in the following verse.⁵

حَرَصْتُ عَلَى طُولِ الْبَقَاءِ وَإِنَّمَا * مُبْدِي النُّفُوسِ أَبَادَهَا لِيُعِيدَهَا

Speaking about a girl who has just died, 'Antarah says, "She was clinging to (the hope of) a long life. However, the One who created all living beings has taken her life away to make her return (to her original state)".

There seems to have been even the conception of Allāh's having raised

2) XIII, v. 17/16.

3) *Diwān*, p. 128, v. 2.

4) See above, chapter IV, section II. The verb *barā*, for *bara'a*, is a synonym of *khalāqa*, meaning "to create".

5) *Diwān*, p. 60, v. 8. *Mubdī*, for *mubdī*, comes from the verb *abda'a* meaning "to bring something into existence for the first time", another synonym of *khalāqa*.

up the sky and established the moon there. In the next example, the famous Jahili warrior-poet, Bâ'ith b. Şuraym al-Yashkurî refers to this idea, again in a solemn oath-formula. He swears "by the One who has raised up the sky and the moon" that he will surely take vengeance on his enemy.⁶

إِنِّي وَمَنْ سَمَكَ السَّمَاءَ مَكَانَهَا * وَالْبَدَرَ كَيْلَةَ نَفْسِهَا وَهَلَالِهَا

"I solemnly swear by the One who has raised up the sky to its place and the moon also, both when it is full in the middle of the month and on the night when it is a crescent."

Since the testimony given by the Koran itself and that afforded by pre-Islamic literature agree with each other as to the existence of the concept of creation among the Jahili Arabs, we may be quite sure about this matter. The problem that must be solved is rather: To what extent was this concept of Divine Creation influential in determining the nature of the Weltanschauung of the pre-Islamic Arabs. And when it comes to this point, we must admit that the concept was, on the whole, an extremely weak one having little influence on the actual life of the Jahili Arabs; it does not seem to have affected in any essential way the conception of human life and existence. In other words, a Jahili man could very well live on quite comfortably without having to pay any attention at all to the origin of his own existence. The significance of this point will be brought home if we remember, by way of contrast, the fact that the Koran urges the Muslims to be constantly conscious of their essential creatureliness. A Muslim who lost this sense of creatureliness would by that very fact cease to be a *muslim* in the real sense of the word, for, then, he would have fallen into the grave sin of "presumptuousness"—an important concept which the Koran signifies by words like *tuġhyân* and *istighnâ*, the former meaning roughly "to exceed the (human) bounds by insolence" and the latter "to feel one's self completely free and independent (i.e. owing nothing to anybody, not even to God)". Thus the consciousness of creatureliness is linked up directly with the problem of the Lord-servant relation between God and man, which we are to discuss in a later chapter.

So the mere occurrence of words like *khalq* "creation", *khâliq* "creator", *bârî* "originator" etc. in pre-Islamic literature should not mislead us into thinking that the concept of Divine Creation was playing a decisive role in the Jahili Weltanschauung. These and several other similar words meaning "creation" that gathered around the name of Allâh constituted only a vaguely defined and

6) *al-Ĥamâsab*, CLXXV, 3.

loosely delimited semantic field, which itself belonged in a larger field that consisted of words having reference to the supernatural order of being. But, we must recall, this semantic field of supernatural beings occupied in the whole of the pre-Islamic conceptual system only a narrow and peripheral place. Unlike the Koranic system in which Allāh the Creator governs the entire Weltanschauung Jahiliyyah did not attach great importance to this semantic field, which, therefore, did not play any decisive role in the Jahili Weltanschauung. This is tantamount to saying that the idea of Allāh's being the very "source" of human existence, if it *was* there, meant very little to the minds of the pre-Islamic Arabs. And this is why the Koran tries so hard to bring home to them the very significance of this idea and to awaken them to the grave implication of it.

II HUMAN DESTINY

There seems to be another important reason why the concept of Divine Creation was such a powerless one in the days of paganism despite the fact that the concept itself did exist, as we have seen, among the Jahili Arabs. It was a weak concept because the Arabs in pre-Islamic times were not very much concerned about the problem of the origin of their being. Their attention, instead of being called to the "beginning" of life, was predominantly directed toward the "end" of life, that is, Death. In fact, every reader of pre-Islamic literature will become aware sooner or later that Death was the only subject that was liable to arouse in the Jahili mind something like philosophical meditation. The Jahili Arabs who, as we saw earlier, were by nature a people least inclined to philosophical thinking, could become philosophers only when they were made seriously conscious of the inevitability of death. Hence the favorite subject of the pre-Islamic poets: the problem of *khulūd* "the eternal life", the absolute unattainableness of which they were so painfully aware of, and which drove them to their characteristic philosophy of life, the pessimistic nihilism.⁷

In any case, whenever a Jahili man was not entirely absorbed in worldly

7) For a more detailed account of this Jahili philosophy of life, see *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran*, chap. V.

affairs, bravery, spoiling and plundering, whenever he found time to come back to himself and reflect on his life, the first problem that came to his mind seems to have been that of Death and of the "powers" or "causes" that would bring it to him. This was the problem of human destiny for the pre-Islamic Arabs. It should be noticed that in this conception there is not involved the notion of the Hereafter, while in ordinary cases "human destiny" concerns mainly the problem of life after death. In the case of the Jahili Arabs, even with regard to this problem attention is almost exclusively centered on the span of life on earth in the very present world, with major emphasis placed on the end of the line; what will come beyond that final point, whatever it may be, is of no concern to the Jahili mind. Besides, as we have seen, for most of the pre-Islamic Arabs there could be absolutely nothing after the end of the present life. The body, once buried in the earth, decays and becomes dust while the soul flies away like the passing wind.

مَلْ نَحْنُ إِلَّا كَأَجْسَادٍ نَتْرُكُهَا * تَحْتَ التُّرَابِ وَأَرْوَاحٍ كَارُوَاهِ

"What are we (if we were not a sort of combination of a body with a soul?) The body, we go down⁸ with it (at our death) under the earth, while the soul (passes away) just like a gust of wind".

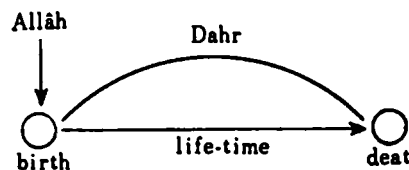
Of all the stages of the life-time of a man, the last stage, i.e., Death, was, as I have just said, the most important one in the Jahili conception of human existence. The first stage, that is, the origin and beginning of his existence, was not very much cared about. But when it *was*, it was normally linked up with the concept of creation. We remarked in the last chapter that the concept of Allāh-Creator was known to the pre-Islamic Arabs. In the Jahili system, too, man was considered to owe his being and existence to the creative activity of Allāh. But there is here an extremely interesting point to note. Man, once created by Allāh, severs his ties, so to speak, with his Creator, and his existence on earth is, from that time on, put into the hands of another, far more powerful, Master. And the tyrannical sway of this Master continues till the very moment of his death, which is nothing but the culmination of the tyranny and oppression under which he has been groaning through all his life. The name of this tyrannical Sovereign is *Dahr* "Time". In chapter III we have quoted in connection with a different problem a verse from the Koran, in which this word

8) Reading *namurru* instead of *tamurru*. The poet is 'Abid b. al-Abras (*Diwān*, Beirut, 1958, IX, 21). It is to be remarked that of the two "*arwāḥ*"s, the first is the plural of *rūḥ* "soul", and the second is the plural of *riḥ* "wind". It seems to me that Charles Lyall has completely missed the sense of this verse in his translation of the *Diwān* of this poet.

with precisely this meaning, is put in the mouth of the Kâfirs.⁹

وَقَالُوا مَا فِيهِ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ

"They say: there is nothing but this present life of ours; we die and we live, and it is only 'Time' *Dahr* that destroys us".



Dahr has various other names: *Zamân* "Time", '*Aṣr*' "Age", *Ayyâm* "Days", '*Aud*' "Time", but the underlying idea is always exactly the same. Here I give only a few examples.

'*Aud*: 10 وَلَوْلَا نَبْلُ عَوْصٍ فِي * حُطْبَايَ وَأَوْصَالِي

Zamân: 11 فَتَغَيَّرَ آبَاتِ الدِّيَارِ مَعَ الْيَلَى * وَلَيْسَ عَلَى رَبِّ الزَّمَانِ كَفِيلٌ

Zamân: 12 هَلْ عِيشَةٌ طَابَتْ لَنَا إِلَّا وَقَدْ * أَبْلَى الزَّمَانُ قَدِيمَهَا وَجَدِيدَهَا

'*Aṣr*: 13 فَإِنْ تَشِبَّ الْقُرُونُ فَذَاكَ عَصْرُ * وَعَاقِبَةُ الْأَصَاغِرِ أَنْ يَشْبُوا

As regards *Dahr* itself, it is quite easy for us to isolate its basic image underlying this concept from any verse in which the word occurs. The following verse by Ta'abbata Sharran, for example, gives us the image of a merciless, cold-blooded tyrant against whom not even the bravest hero cannot fight:

بَرَزَنِي الدَّهْرُ وَكَانَ غَشُومًا * يَا بَيْتِي جَارُهُ مَا بُدِّلُ

"*Dahr* has plundered me, the *Dahr* who is a merciless tyrant, of (a dear friend of mine) a haughty one who has never allowed his client to be disgraced, (i.e. let alone himself)".¹⁴

Very frequently *Dahr* is described as a wild ferocious animal that bites you with sharp teeth.

..... فَإِنَّ الدَّهْرَ أَعْصَلَ دُو سَفْبِ

9) XLV, v. 23/24.

10) "If only there were no arrow of '*Aud*' stuck into my whole body and limbs...." said by the Jahili poet al-Find al-Zimmâni (*al-Hamâsah* CLXXVI, 3) lamenting over the decay due to old-age.

11) (The wind and the rain) have completely changed the aspect of the abodes together with the decay due to time. Indeed, no guarantee there is against the destructive power of *Zamân*. (Ṭarafah, *Diwân* ed. M. Seligsohn, Paris, 1901, IV, 4)

12) "No sooner does a way of living seem enjoyable to us than it is destroyed completely by *Zamân*, whether it be old or new." (*Antarah*, *Diwân*, p. 61, v. 5)

13) "If my locks grow grey, it is the work of '*Aṣr*', and the inevitable end of all that are young is grey hair." (Abd Allâh Salimah, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyât*, XVIII, v. 11)

14) *al-Hamâsah* CCLXXIII, 6.

"...for *Dahr* has hooked teeth (that never quit), ever ready to injure us".¹⁵

إِذَا الدَّهْرُ عَضَّتْكَ أُنْيَابُهُ * كَدَى الشَّرِّ قَارِمٌ بِهِ مَا أَرَمُ

"When *Dahr* bites you with his dog-teeth in misfortune, bite him back with all your might as much as he bites you".¹⁶

Thus the pre-Islamic view of human life has at its very center Something dark and mysterious that extends its tyrannical sway over the life process of every individual man from the cradle to the grave. And this Something which roughly corresponds to what we usually call "Fate", is almost exclusively conceived of as a half-personal destructive force that not only brings all things to decay but also causes incessantly all kinds of suffering, misery and misfortune to human existence all through the span of life. This latter aspect of the manifestation of its destructive activity has a number of particular names, like *ṣurūf* ("ṣurūf of *Dahr*"), *ḥadathān* (*ḥadathān* of *Dahr*), or *ḥawādith*, *rayb* ("rayb of *Dahr*" or "rayb of *Zamān*"), etc., all meaning approximately "unpredictable turns (of Fortune)"; it is sometimes called metaphorically *banat al-dahr* "Daughters of *Dahr*".

أَبَدَ الْعَارِثِ الْمَلِكِ بْنِ عَمْرِو * وَبَعْدَ الْخَيْرِ حُجَيْرِ ذِي الْقَبَابِ
أَرْجَى مِنْ صُرُوفِ الدَّهْرِ لَنَا * وَلَمْ تَنْفُلْ عَنِ الْقَمِّ الْهَبَابِ

"After having seen the death of (my grandfather) the king al-Ḥārith, and (my father) Ḥujr the Peerless, who possessed so many mansions, how could I hope for tenderness from the *ṣurūf* (turns) of *Dahr*, which, I know, never leave untouched even the lofty mountains of massy rocks?"¹⁷

رَمَتْنِي بَنَاتُ الدَّهْرِ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا أَرَى * فَكَيْفَ لِمَنْ يُرْمَى وَلَيْسَ بِرَامِ

"The Daughters of *Dahr* have shot at me from a place I cannot see. What can a man do when he is shot at without being able to shoot back?"¹⁸

And no one, not even the most valient warrior, the wisest sage, can ever escape from the blind and capricious tyranny of *Dahr*. At the root of the deep irremediable pessimism of Jahiliyyah lies such a dark conception of human destiny.

15) Iyās b. al-Aratt, *al-Ḥamāsab* CDLXXXV, 3.

16) Juraybah b. al-Ashyam, a *Mukhadram* poet, *al-Ḥamāsab*, CCLX, 4.

17) Imr' al-Qays, *Diwān*, Cairo, 1958, II, vv. 10-11.

18) 'Amr b. Qamī'ah, *Diwān*, ed. Lyall, Cambridge, 1919, III, v. 11.

The destructive power of Dahr becomes particularly manifest at the end of a man's existence. It is interesting that Dahr then changes its name and assumes various new names, the commonest among them being *maniyyah* (pl. *mandā*), *manūn*, *himām*, *hummah*.¹⁹ In the following verse from the *Diwān* of the Hudhayl tribe, two of the words here mentioned are used side by side, showing that they were practically synonymous with each other.

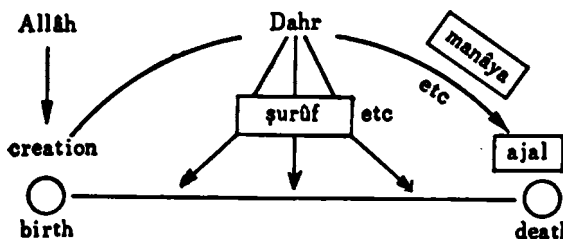
لَعْمَرُكَ وَالْمَنَائَا غَالِبَاتُ * وَمَا تُغْنِي التَّيَمَّاتُ الْعِيَامَا

"Yes, indeed, *Mandā* always gains the ultimate victory, and even talismans are of no use against the destructive power of *Himām*."²⁰

These words all mean "death". But they do not simply mean "death", but "death" as the last and most destructive manifestation of the power of Dahr. So, although in contexts of this kind we find the word *maut* "death" often used in such a way that it might be replaced freely by one of these words, there is semantically a wide difference between the two cases. *Maut* means "death" as a natural-biological, we might say-phenomenon, while the group of words that we are dealing with here belong to the semantic field of human destiny represented by the focus-word *dahr*. They refer, in other words, to the last phase of the Dahr's rule over a man's life-time; they represent the particular forms which Dahr assumes when it approaches the ultimate goal. It is, then, quite natural that this goal itself should also be often designated by the same words.²¹

As regards this concept of the final point or goal of the Dahr's rule, there is another important thing to be noticed. As we have remarked this final point

corresponds, from the biological point of view, to "death", just as "creation" corresponds to "birth". But this is not yet the end of the whole story. The final point of the Dahr's rule is capable of being viewed from a somewhat different angle, that of determinism. And it was in reality a very common view among the pre-Islamic Arabs. The conception is that



19) On these and other related words in pre-Islamic literature, see an interesting philological study by Werner Caskel: *Das Schicksal in der altarabischen Poesie*, Leipzig, 1926.

20) *Diwān al-Hudhaliyyīn*, II, p. 62, v. 3, Sakhr al-Ghayy.

21) Of course it often happens also that the words are used in a more loose sense. Then they are simply synonyms of *dahr*.

the final point of a man's span of life is in each individual case definitely and immutably fixed and determined beforehand. Everybody, in other words, has an appointed day on which he has to meet his death. "Death" from this point of view is called *ajal* (pl. *âjâl*) "the doom" or "the appointed time".

When that day arrives, anything, however small and weak, can kill anybody, however strong and powerful he may be. Al-Salakah, mother of the famous pre-Islamic outlaw al-Salik, says bewailing the death of her son and consoling herself at the same time:²²

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ قَاتِلٌ * حِينَ تَلْقَى أَجَلَكَ

"Anything indeed can kill you when you meet your own *ajal*".

It is, as al-Nâbighah says in one of his poems on Dahr,²³ something "written (*maktûb*, from *kataba* "to write")". And nobody can put it back by a single day.

فَإِنْ قَارَ سَهْمٌ لِلْمَيْتَةِ لَمْ أَكُنْ * بَزُوعًا وَهَلَ عَنْ ذَلِكَ مِنْ مُتَأَخَّرٍ

"When I get the arrow of Death [the allusion is to the game of chance, a kind of lottery by arrows], I shall never lose my composure, for (of what avail will it be?) Is there anybody at all who can remain alive beyond (the appointed time)?"²⁴

Whatever you may do, you cannot add even a single hour to your appointed time, as 'Antarah²⁵ emphasizes in one of his poems:

وَلَا تَفِرَّ إِذَا مَا خُنْتَ مَعْرَكَةً * فَمَا يَزِيدُ فِرَارُ الْمَرْءِ فِي الْأَجَلِ

"Do not flee once you have gone deep into a battle, for flying before the enemy will never defer your appointed time (*ajal*)".

Thus everybody has his own *ajal*, and every day is a step towards that fated time. Before the philosophic eye of the Jahili poet there unfolds itself a magnificent and tragic panorama of all mankind marching steadily towards the ultimate end.

يَا حَارٍ مَا طَلَمَتْ شَمْسٌ وَلَا غَرَبَتْ * إِلَّا تَقَرَّبَ آجَالُ لِمَعَادٍ

"Listen, Hârith! There never rises the sun and never does it set but that

22) al-*Hamâsah* CCCX, 4. The poem is attributed to al-Salakah by al-Tibrizi, while al-Marzûqî attributes it to "a woman whose name is unknown".

23) al-Nâbighah, *Diwân*, V, 4. As regards the important concept of "writing", see the last paragraph of this chapter.

24) 'Urwah b. al-Ward, in the famous "Song of an Outlaw", *Diwân*, Beirut, 1953, p. 42, v. 2.

25) 'Antarah, *Diwân*, p. 132, v. 5.

the *âjal* (pl. of *ajal*) draw nearer the promised time (*mi'âd*)."²⁶

This is, indeed, a very gloomy view of life, the whole span of life being conceived of as a series of calamitous events, governed not by the natural law of growth and decay, but by the inscrutable will of a dark, blind, semi-personal Being, from whose strong grip there can be no escape. And only against the background of this tragical atmosphere can we understand the real historical significance of the Koranic world-view.

In fact, the Koran offers an entirely different picture of the human condition. All of a sudden, the sky clears up, the darkness is dissipated, and in the place of the tragic sense of life there appears a new bright vista of the eternal life. The difference between the two world-views on this problem is exactly like the difference between Night and Day.

In the new Islamic system, too, Allâh as the Creator marks the starting-point of human existence. But already here, at the very outset, we begin to observe a fundamental change. In the old Jahili system, the creative activity of Allâh is both the beginning and the end of His intervention in human affairs. He does not as a rule take care of what He has brought into existence just like an irresponsible father who never cares for his children; the task is taken over, as we have just seen, by another Being called Dahr.

In the Islamic system, on the contrary, creation marks just the beginning of the Divine rule over the created things. All human affairs even the minutest and apparently most insignificant details of life are put under the strict supervision of Allâh. And the most important point about this is that this God, according to the Koran, is the God of Justice, who never does any wrong (*ẓulm*) to anybody. No more Dahr, nor more secret machinations of Dahr. The very existence itself of some such thing as Dahr is flatly denied and dismissed as a mere product of groundless imagination. The whole course of human life is now placed under the absolute control of the will of God.

Of course, the problem of death still remains. Death is inevitable.

أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشِيدَةٍ

"Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, though you hide yourselves in castles solidly built".²⁷

Even the Prophet himself cannot be an exception.

26) 'Abid b. al-Abraḡ, *Diwân*, XVIII, 2.

27) IV, v. 80/78.

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِيَشْرِي مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ قَابَ نَمِتَ فَهُمْ الْغَالِيُونَ . كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ

"Never have We assigned immortality to any man before you (Muhammad). What! if you die, can other people live forever? Every soul must taste of death".²⁸

This is because Allāh has "measured out death to all mankind".²⁹ And Allāh "gives life and gives death"³⁰ as He likes.

The concept of *ajal* continues to exist in the Islamic system just as it did in Jahiliyyah. Here, too, *ajal* is the "appointed term", and, when applied to the concept of human life, it means nothing other than "death" as the ultimate term determined by Allāh.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهُ

"It is He who has created you from clay, then has determined a term (*ajal*). So there is an *ajal* (for your life) clearly stated with Him".³¹

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كِتَابًا مُّؤَجَّلًا

"No soul ever dies except by the permission of Allāh, at a term clearly dated (in the knowledge of God)".³²

The inevitability of death in the form of *ajal*, however, does not lead, in the Islamic conception, as it used to do in Jahiliyyah, to a gloomy pessimistic view of human existence, because the *ajal* in this sense is not, in the new Weltanschauung, the real terminal point of existence. It is, on the contrary, the very threshold of a new and entirely different kind of life—the eternal life (*khulūd*). In this system, the *ajal*, i.e. death, of each individual man is but a middle stage in the whole length of his life, a turning-point in his life history situated between the Dunyā and the Hereafter. Unlike the Jahili view of life which would see nothing beyond the *ajal*, the Koranic view sees precisely beyond the *ajal* the real life, real because it is "eternal" (*khālid*) as the Koran is never tired of emphasizing.

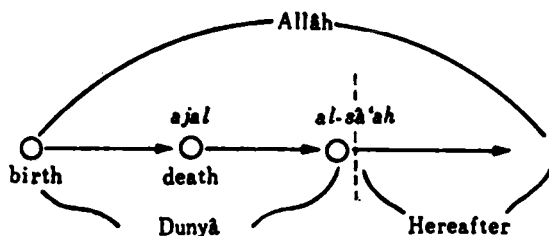
28) XXI, vv. 35-36/34-35.

29) LVI, v. 60.

30) IX, v. 117/116.

31) VI, v. 2.

32) III, v. 139/145. Note the word *kitāb* "what is written" in this verse.



And just as each individual has his own *ajal*, the *Dunyâ* itself has its ultimate *ajal*, which is nothing but the "Hour" (*al-sâ'ah*), the Day of Judgment. Beyond this final *ajal*, man steps into the

new life of eternity. It is to be remarked that, in the Koranic conception, this whole process, comprising both the life in the *Dunyâ* and the life in the Hereafter, is under the administration of Allâh, as shown in the above diagram. This raises, within the limits of the first half of the course of human existence—i.e., the stretch of the line between birth and death—the very famous problem of *Qadâ' wa qadar* Divine 'Foreordination', which is admittedly one of the most difficult problems that the later Islamic thought will have to face.

Whether this thought of Divine Foreordination is already there in the Koran clearly stated and formulated as the theologians assert, or whether, as Dr. Daud Rahbar³³ thinks, the theologians are here reading into the Koran their own thought, is a difficult point to decide. But, however this may be, it is quite certain that the Koran itself raises this problem in an extremely acute form by the very fact that it puts the whole course of human life under the absolute control of the will of God.

It is not necessary for us in the present study to try to explore the intricacies of this problem. The problem, in my view, rather belongs properly to Islamic theology. Besides, all the relevant passages in the Koran have been examined philologically by Dr. Rahbar. So I would be content here with adding a few words to what he has said on this problem.

That the concept of Foreordination is not an invention of the theologians is shown by the fact that even before the rise of Islam, almost exactly the same idea seems to have been circulating among some Arabs of a special religious tendency, and that even outside the small circle of the *Ḥanīfs*. The great poet Labīd who, as I have pointed out before, was famous for his deep religious nature, was one of those who openly professed the belief in Divine Foreordination. Here is an example:

لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ النَّاسُ مَعْوَةَ كِتَابِهِ * أَنَّى وَلَيْسَ قَطَاؤُهُ يُبَدَّلُ

"We men are not able to erase what He (i.e. Allâh) has once written

33) *Op. cit.* the chapters on *Qadâ'* and *Qadar*.

down (*kitāb*). How can this be, when His *qadā'* is absolutely unalterable".³⁴

The word *qadar* is also used by Labid with the same meaning:³⁵

وَلَا أَقُولُ إِذَا مَا أَزَمْتُ * يَا وَيْحَ نَفْسِي مِمَّا أَحَدَّثَ الْقَدَرُ

"Even in deep distress I never say 'Woe is me!' for what *qadar* has brought about".

That this and similar verses should not be lightly explained away as forgery as it used to be done will be clear to all those who are at all familiar with the profound religiousness and the natural monotheistic tendency of this poet.

We must notice, further, that this usage of the word *kitāb* "what Allāh has written", i.e. Divine Decree, is in no way an isolated example.

In the *Diwān* of the Hudhayl tribe,³⁶ for instance, Usāmah b. al-Hārith uses the same word in the same sense, bewailing the hapless fate of his tribe, and says:

وَكَانَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتَابًا

"...but such was the *kitāb* (foreordination) for them!".

34) *Diwān*, ed. Huber-Brockelmann, Leiden, 1891, XLII, 2.

35) Cited by Caskel, *op. cit.*, p. 20, Labid, XII, 18.

36) *Diwān al-Hudhaliyyin*, II, p. 197, v. I.

CHAPTER VI

COMMUNICATIVE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN (I) —NON-LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION—

I THE 'SIGNS' OF GOD

There are two chief types of mutual 'understanding' between God and man. One is linguistic or verbal, that is, through the use of a human language common to both parties, and the other is non-verbal, that is, through the use of 'natural signs' on the part of God and gestures and bodily movements on the part of man. In both cases, quite naturally the initiative is taken by God Himself, the human side of the phenomenon being basically a matter of 'response' to the initiative displayed by God.

The will of God to open up direct communication between Him and mankind manifests itself, according to the Koran, in the form of His "sending down" the *āyāt* (pl. of *āyah*) "signs". On this basic level, there is no essential difference between linguistic and non-linguistic Signs; both types are equally divine *āyāt*. Revelation (*wahy*) which is the typical form of communication from God to man by means of language, is in this sense only a partial phenomenon comprised with several others under the wider concept of God-man communication. This is why the Koran actually calls the revealed words *āyāt* without distinguishing them from other "signs" of a non-linguistic nature that are also called *āyāt*.

But since the linguistic or verbal *āyāt* form by themselves a very particular class, which is better designated by the technical term of Revelation *wahy*, and since, moreover, this class is in some important respects quite different in nature and structure from the non-verbal *āyāt*, and has so many characteristic features that are not shared by the latter, we may justifiably regard it as an independent unit and give it a separate treatment. This will be the special subject of the following chapter.

The present chapter, in this sense, may be considered rather an introduc-

tion to the more specific and more important problem of Revelation, for it purports to give, first and foremost, the more general structural characteristics of Divine communication comprising both the verbal type and the non-verbal one. In any case most of what will be said in this chapter will apply equally well to the phenomenon of Revelation, of which it will provide a kind of background knowledge. This is true of course only of communication in the descending direction, i.e., the case in which God is the sender of the signs and man the receiver. As to communication in the ascending direction, i.e., from man to God, there is too immense a difference between the verbal type and the non-verbal type that the two cannot in any way be treated in the same breath. Let us begin with the communication from God to man.

God is showing "signs" at every moment, *dyah* after *dyah*, to those who have enough intelligence to grasp them as "signs". The meaning of this, in the sense in which the Koran understands it, is that all that we usually call natural phenomena, such as rain, wind, the structure of the heaven and the earth, alternation of day and night, the turning about of the winds, etc., all these should be understood not as simple natural phenomena, but as so many "signs" or "symbols" pointing to the Divine intervention in human affairs, as evidences of the Divine Providence, care and wisdom displayed by God for the good of human beings on this earth.

Just as a waymark must not cause a traveller to rivet his eyes on itself, but direct him towards a certain place which is the real destination of his travel, so every natural phenomenon, instead of absorbing our attention, *as a natural phenomenon*, and transfixing it immovably to itself, should act always in such a way that our attention be directed towards something beyond it. At this depth of understanding, a natural phenomenon is no longer a natural phenomenon; it is a "sign" or "symbol"—*dyah* as the Koran calls it. And this Something Beyond to which all the so-called natural phenomena point as "signs" is, in the Koranic conception, God Himself, or more precisely, this or that aspect of God such as His Benevolence, His Power, His Sovereignty, His Justice, etc.

The Koranic conception may be made more understandable by a comparison with the philosophical *Weltanschauung* of a modern Western philosopher, Karl Jaspers who, interestingly enough, has made precisely this point one of the foundation-stones of his system. In this system much attention is paid to the problem of the symbolic nature of the world. According to Jaspers, we live at several different levels. When we leave the level of the normal, daily, commonplace reason (*Verstand*), at which natural things including man appear

to our eyes simply as natural things, and step into the realm of *Existenz*, we find ourselves suddenly in a strange world, standing in front of God, whom he calls philosophically *das Umgreifende* meaning something infinitely great comprising everything from above. This All-Compriser keeps talking to us, not directly, but through the natural things. Things no longer exist here as natural, objective things, but they are symbols, through which the All-Compriser talks to us. Things at this stage are "ciphers" (*Chiffer* as he calls them) or cryptograms. So that the whole universe is represented as a big *Chifferschrift*, a book written entirely in cryptograms. In other words the world is a big book of symbols, a book which only those who live at the level of *Existenz* are able to read. This would exactly correspond to the Koranic thought according to which all things are in truth *āyāt* of Allāh, and their symbolic nature can only be grasped by those who have '*aql*', "intellect" who can "think" (*tafakkur*) in the true sense of the word.

Regarding the problem as to whether or not this usage of the word *āyah* was originated by the Koran, we should remark that it was not certainly in the Bedouin tradition, that is to say, in the genuine Arabic language. As far as I know, there is no trace of the word having been used in a religious sense; it is always used in the naturalistic sense. This, however, does not seem to be true of the Ḥanīfītic circle. The poet Labīd, for example, who, as we saw, shows a markedly Ḥanīfītic coloring in both his diction and conception, has the following verse:

وَالْمَاءُ وَالنَّيْرَانُ مِنْ آيَاتِهِ * فِيهِنَّ مَوْعِظَةٌ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَجْهَلِ

"And water and fire (i.e., the rain and the heavenly lights such as the sun, the moon and the stars) are His (i.e. Allāh's) *āyāt*. In them there is a lesson to learn for those who are not *jāhil* (i.e., those who are capable of thinking rightly)".¹

The problem, however, is not of central importance for our present purposes. What is more important is the semantic structure of the concept of *āyah* in the Koranic system itself. To this problem we shall now turn.

The Divine *āyāt* as the Koran understands the word in a general sense, comprise, as I said at the outset, both verbal and non-verbal symbols. The verbal type, i.e., Revelation, is, in the nature of the case, much more precise than the other type, being essentially conceptual. It presents Divine Will in

1) Labīd, *Diwān* XLII, v. 5. As regards the meaning of *jāhil*, I shall give a detailed explanation later (see chapter VIII).

an articulate form. In other words, what God wants to convey to the human mind is here given analytically, one element after another, each element being given as much conceptual precision as possible. While in the non-verbal one, Divine Will is manifested globally, not analytically. And since in this latter case there can be no conceptual precision, the message conveyed must necessarily be extremely vague and inarticulate. But the non-verbal *āyāt* have one conspicuous advantage: they can be and *are* actually addressed to mankind at large without any discrimination; moreover they can be given directly without any intermediary, while the verbal type can be given directly only to one particular person, the Prophet, and only indirectly and mediately to mankind. All men are living in the very midst of the world of divine symbols, and these are accessible to anybody if only he has the mental and spiritual capacity to interpret them as symbols.

Now, as we know already from what has been said in the first chapters of this book on the methodological principles of semantics, the semantical analysis of the concept of *āyah* in the Koran will consist in our trying to understand what it means in terms of the 'semantic field' which this focus-word forms around itself. We have, in other terms, to examine the words of decisive importance—the key-words—that surround it in the Koranic contexts.

For this purpose, the most important thing to remark is, in my view, the fact that, given the Divine *āyāt*, whether verbal or non-verbal, the only possible human response is, according to the Koran, either "acceptance" or "rejection"—*taṣḍīq* lit. "regarding, and accepting, as true" or *takdhīb* lit. "regarding as false". Man either accepts the *āyāt* as Truth (*ḥaqq*) or rejects them altogether as Falsehood (*bāṭil*) having no reality behind them, mere products of fantasy and groundless imagination. And of course, *taṣḍīq* "acceptance" is the first step towards *īmān* "belief", and *takdhīb* is the very gist of *kufr*, the only difference being that the former pair (*taṣḍīq-takdhīb*) is much more realistic and naked in conception than the latter pair (*īmān-kufr*) which is a degree higher in the scale of abstraction. In the Koran we witness *taṣḍīq* and *takdhīb* as two opposite principles engaged in a fierce life-and-death conceptual battle with each other. And this is one of the basic oppositions which, as I said earlier, contribute towards producing that intense dramatic tension that reigns over the Koranic world-view. In this sense, the relation between *taṣḍīq* and *takdhīb* must be considered the very axis around which revolves the whole semantic field, and which, therefore, assigns to each of the key-terms its proper place in this conceptual system. All this must be considered in more detail now.

AYAH

Divine Part

Human Part

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

(6)

(7)

God "sends down" the <i>āyāt</i>	Man understands the meaning of the <i>āyāt</i>	The organ of understanding	The meanings of the <i>āyāt</i>	The human response	The immediate consequence	The final result
Tanzil	'aqla	lubb (pl. albab)	[A] nāmab rahmab etc. (tabībīr)	[a] taṣḍīq	[I] shukr (A+a)	īmān (I, II)
	fabima					
	faqiba					
	tafakkara	qalb (fu'ād)	[B] iniqām 'iqāb 'adbāb sakkat etc. (mālbāt)	[b] takdīb	[II] taqwā (B+a)	kufr (III)
	taḥakkara					
	tawassama					
	etc.				[III] kufr (A.B+b)	

is not a mere context, in which a number of words happen to be used together in a casual combination.⁵ In a semantic field, nothing is casual; every combination within the field is essential in the sense that it represents an essential aspect of the *Weltanschauung*.

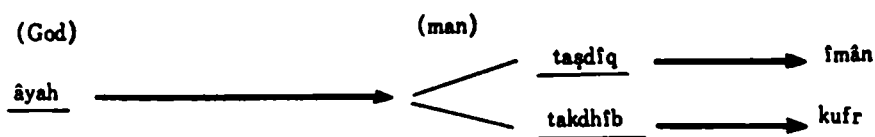
This, be it remarked incidentally, should not be taken in the sense that all the words that belong in this particular field cannot enter into other combinations in other semantic fields. One and the same word may and usually does belong to several different fields. The word *qalb* is not exclusively the locus of *taṣḍīq* and *takdhīb*; it is the locus of a number of other mental activities. The word *'aqala* does not exclusively and necessarily mean "understanding Divine *āyāt*". But as long as it works within this particular field of *āyāt*, it has a very particular and very important semantic coloring which it has acquired by being associated with all other members of this system and influenced by the peculiar structure of the whole field itself.

This kind of semantic coloring is very delicate and subtle to grasp, but also extremely important in determining the meaning of word. The meaning of a word is not exhausted by its basic meaning. It has also a relational meaning, and this latter always comes from the essential combinations into which it enters in a given system.

II DIVINE GUIDANCE

In the preceding section we have examined the general structure of the semantic field which forms itself around the focus-word *āyah*. The basic part of this semantic field may be described more briefly as follows: (1) God sends down the *āyah*; (2) man responds to it by either accepting it as Truth (*taṣḍīq*) or rejecting it as Falsehood (*takdhīb*); (3) the former naturally leads to "belief" (*imān*) and the latter to "disbelief" (*kufṛ*).

5) Take for example the Koranic verse "They (Moses and his page) forgot their fish" نَسُوا مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ (XVIII, v. 60/61). The combination of the two words "forgetting" and "fish" is quite casual. It is a mere context; it does not produce in any way a semantic field. Nobody would say that the verb *nasiya* "to forget" has acquired a special semantic coloring from this particular combination.

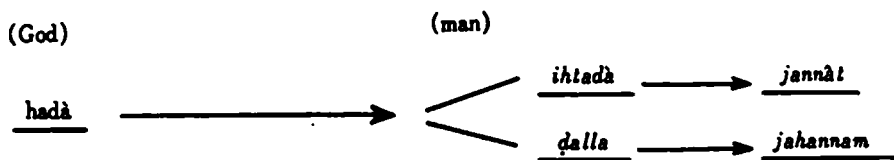


(Diagram I)

This, however, is not the only semantic field of *āyah* to be found in the Koran. In fact, the Koran offers two different fields formed around the central idea of Allāh's sending down the *āyāt*. The interesting point is that they do not exist in the Koranic Weltanschauung quite independently of each other as two separate fields, but are formed in such a way that they correspond exactly to each other as regards their basic structure. As far as concerns the abstract skeleton framework, both are almost exactly the same; only the same structure is used twice, being each time provided with different conceptual clothing, to produce two different semantic fields. And this formal correspondence between two sister fields reflecting one and the same piece of reality—the communicative activity of God, in our particular case—in two different ways is exceedingly important for our purpose, because here we see the Koran interpreting itself, so to speak, before our eyes.

It is one of the characteristic features of this second system that the 'articulation' of the field is done in terms of a set of concepts which, unlike those used in the first system, have apparently nothing to do with communication.

Here the concept of *āyāt*, to begin with, is replaced by the concept of 'Guidance' *hudā*. This would imply that God's act of sending down the *āyāt*



(Diagram II)

is, according to the Koranic view, just the same thing as His guidance; the *āyāt* are but the concrete expression of the Divine intention to guide mankind to the right path. And just as in the first system man could choose either *taṣḍīq* or *takdhīb*, so in the second system man is free to respond to this divine act in one of the two possible ways, i.e., either by *ihtidā* "following the guidance" that has been offered or *ḍalāl* "going out of the right way" by refusing to follow the guidance that has been so graciously offered to him. And those who choose

the first way are on the road to Heavenly Garden (*jannah*) while those who choose the second are on the road to Hell (*jahannam*).

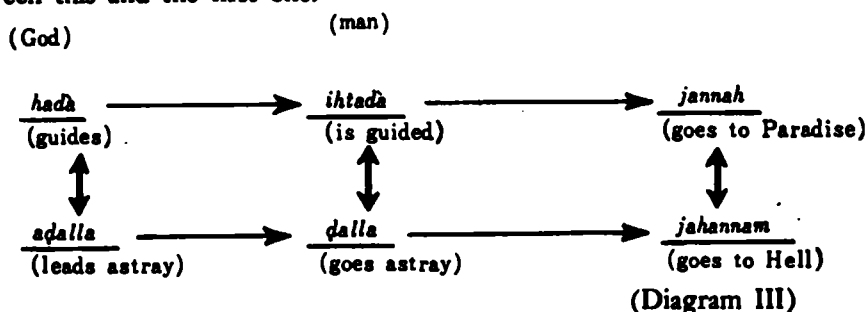
All this is still only the first half of the whole picture. The second half is no less important than the first, and although at the Koranic stage the two are simply there existing side by side without apparently causing any trouble at all, they later begin to clash with one another, and, particularly in theology, end by standing in sharp unequivocal opposition.

In this second version, the whole field is viewed from the standpoint of the Foreordination (*qada' wa qadar*) which we have already examined in connection with the problem of the ontological relation between God and man. From this particular point of view, everything that happens on this earth is due ultimately to God's Will. In this perspective, a man who takes the right way by preferring *ibtidā'* to *qalāl* or who swerves away from the right way by choosing *qalāl* instead of *ibtidā'*, is not, in reality, choosing anything for himself by himself. His very act of responding to Divine guidance in either way is the necessary result of God's Will. He chooses *qalāl* or *ibtidā'* not because he wills, but simply because God himself wills that he should do so. In other words both man's *ibtidā'* and *qalāl*, are equally due to Divine Will (*mashī'ah*). Thus we read:

مَنْ يَشَأِ اللَّهُ يُضِلَّهُ وَمَنْ يَشَأِ يُصِّرْهُ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

"Whomsoever God will, He makes him go astray, and whomsoever He will, He sets him on a straight path".⁶

This second interpretation of the matter may be shown conveniently in the form of a simple diagram (III). And if we compare the two diagrams (II and III) with one another, we will see immediately the fundamental difference between this and the first one.



The comparison will make it clear that in the second system, it is not the

⁶ VI, v. 39.

case, as it is in the first, that man responds to Divine guidance either with *ihtidā'* "being guided" or with *ḡalāl* "going astray". Rather, he responds to Divine *hudā* with *ihtidā'*, and to *iqḡlāl* "leading astray" with *ḡalāl* "going astray". This is tantamount to saying that man, in this view, is no longer considered free to choose either *ihtidā'* or *ḡalāl*, given Divine guidance. Everything would seem to be already fixed and decided from the very beginning. So man's *ḡalāl* "going astray" is nothing but the direct and necessary result of God's *iqḡlāl* "leading astray". And this Divine act of "leading astray" none can resist, and in such a case, not even the Prophet himself can ever hope to lead anybody back to the right path, as the Koran itself repeatedly emphasizes.

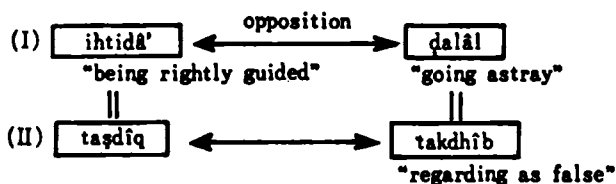
Thus we see in this second system, already at the initial stage, a basic opposition of *hudā* "guiding" and *adalla* "leading astray" and this opposition runs through the whole system, so that we have here two lines running parallel to each other from the very beginning to the end.

The existence of these two different 'versions' of one and the same 'story' and the contrast between them in the Koran could not but raise later among the Muslim thinkers grave problems regarding the concept of human freedom and moral responsibility. For once you adopt a strictly logical point of view, you must recognize the existence of a logical contradiction between these two systems. Only, the standpoint of the Koran is not that of pure logic; the Koranic thought unfolds itself on a plane which is essentially different from that of the logic of human reason. And as long as one keeps oneself on this level of thinking there can be no place for such a problem. In any case, the Koran itself did not raise the problem of human freedom in this particular form.

Without going any further into the theological problem of human freedom and God's justice, let us now turn to the inner semantic structure of the concept of Guidance, which is admittedly one of the most important concepts in the Koran. We have seen above how the same field is conceptualized in the Koran in two different ways. But whichever system we take as basic, we meet with always the same conceptual opposition of *ihtidā'* and *ḡalāl* as soon as the human part begins. This is common to both systems. And this opposition of *ihtidā'* and *ḡalāl* is to be found almost everywhere in the Koran; indeed the two constitute one of the commonest and most frequently used conceptual pairs in the Koran.⁷ ♦

As I have said before, this pair has its counterpart, in another semantic

7) For example, XXXIX, v. 38/37; II, v. 170/175, etc.



field, in the opposition of *taşdıq* and *takdhîb* as the two basic forms of human response to the *âyât* sent down by God. But the

first pair (I) has something which distinguishes it definitely from the second (II). Unlike the latter, the opposition *ihtidâ'*...*dalâl* is not conceivable without there being a more basic concept underlying it: that of "Way". The concept of "Way" is the 'focus-word' of the entire field. In other words, the concept of Way plays in this semantic field the role which the concept of "sign" (*âyah*) plays in the other. In the Koran, this concept of Way is signified by various words, *sabl*, *şirât*, *tariq* being the most important ones.

Likewise, *ihtidâ'* and *dalâl* have each a number of synonyms. In place of *ihtidâ'* are sometimes used, for example, *rushd* or *rashâd* meaning "to enter on the right path", *qaşd* meaning "to take one's way toward the right destination". As to *dalâl* (verb *dalla*), many different words are actually used in the Koran as its synonyms: *amiha*, for example, which means "to wander about away from the right way" (ex. II, v. 14/15), *qasa'a* "to swerve from the right way" (ex. LXXII, vv. 14-15), *nakaba* or *nakiba* with the same meaning (ex. XXIII, v. 76/74),⁸ *tâha* "to get lost in the desert and wander in bewilderment" (ex. V, v. 29/26), and *ghawâ*, *ghawiya* (inf. *ghayy* and *ghawâyah*) "to go astray" (ex. VII, v. 143/146).

It will be easy to see that there underlies all these concepts the very basic concept of Way. The problem is always: Does a man take the right way leading to his true destination, that is, God and the salvation of his soul, or does he deviate from it and wander about blindly in the desert of godlessness? But what is more important to remark is that the Way in question is not simply a way; the most decisive element in this image of Way in the Koranic conception is its being "straight" (*mustaqîm*).

The Way which God indicates through His *âyât* is "straight". This means in the Koranic context that if you but follow its line, it will lead you straight to salvation. And this straightness of the Divine Way stands in sharp contrast to the "crookedness" (*i'waj*) of all other ways. Crookedness means in this context that the way, instead of leading you to your destination, leads you away from

⁸ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنَاجِبُونَ "Those who believe not in the Hereafter are deviating from the right way".

it:

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ

"(God commands, saying:) This is My straight way, so do you follow it! Follow not other ways (*subul* pl. of *sabil*, with the implication that they are all "crooked") lest they scatter you away from His way".⁹

So again we see two important concepts opposed to each other as two conflicting principles: "straightness" and "crookedness" in the semantic field of the Way-concept. It is evident that "straight" and "crooked" are here value-words, for they stand for religious values, one positive and the other negative. The opposition stands out with particular clearness because the Koran describes the Kâfirs as constantly trying to make the "straight" way of God "crooked".

لَمْ تَصُدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ تَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا

"Why do you try to turn away from the way of God those who believe, desiring to make it crooked (*'iwajj*)".¹⁰

لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَمُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ
كَافِرُونَ

"The curse of God is on the evildoers (i.e. the Kâfirs) who turn (people) away from the way of God, desiring to make it crooked!"¹¹

As regards these concepts which, as we have just seen, constitute a large independent semantic field, we should observe that this latter was not at all a new field introduced by the Koran for the first time into the Arabic vocabulary. On the contrary, it was a very old field. It was already there in Jahiliyyah, and it used to play no less an important role in Jahiliyyah, the only difference being that in Jahiliyyah its importance was 'material' while in Islam its significance lies wholly in its metaphorical application.

For the people living in the desert, the problem of knowing the right way or getting lost in a vast tract of sand was naturally one of life and death. In those days each tribe had its own territory. Within the limited confines of the territory, no serious problem could arise concerning the right path to follow, but once outside their own familiar territory, most of them were helpless; there they had to stand face to face with a vast, limitless expanse of sand full of

9) VI, v. 154/153.

10) III, v. 94/99, *'iwajan* for *mu'wajjatan*.

11) VII, vv. 42-43/44-45.

"horrors" (*ahwāl*), which they often described—and must have really felt—as an uncouth monster ready to pounce upon them at any moment, and prey upon them. - In such a situation it is quite understandable that the Jahili Arabs developed a whole set of conceptual network having reference to *budā* and "way". Many different kinds of way were distinguished, and the desert itself was named differently according as it had such and such a property or not: whether, for example, it had water or not, whether it was traversed by a clear and plain road or trackless, whether it was a vast waste without any way-marks, etc. Thus, to give only one example out of many, the word *yahmā* was used particularly for a dangerous desert in which it was absolutely impossible for anybody to tell where the right way was, an immense plain of sand with no beaten path. There was even a particular verb for walking at random in this kind of desert (*ʿasafa*):

.....مُعْتَسِفٌ الْأَرْضِ مُقْفَرٌ جَهْلٌ

"A man travelling in the desert without knowing the way (*mu'tasif* from *ʿasafa*), alone (i.e. separated from his companions), utterly unacquainted with the place".¹²

And a stupid man who fell into the habit of bringing trouble upon himself by stepping thoughtlessly into such dangerous places was called *ʿissif* (derived from the same root as *ʿasafa*). An interesting combination of these concepts is found in al-Shanfarā's famous *Lāmiyyah al-ʿArab*.¹³

وَلَسْتُ بِبَعِيَارِ الظَّلَامِ إِذَا اتَّعَثْتُ * هَدَى الْهَوَجِلِ السِّيفِ يَهْمَاءُ هَوَجَلٌ

"I am not a man to get confused and perplexed in the darkness of night, when all of a sudden there looms right ahead a vast trackless desert and makes the thoughtless fool lose his sense of *budā*".

But the point is that all these words were understood chiefly in the most literal and material sense. The semantic field formed by words of this kind had no religious implication in Jahiliyyah. Take for example the word *budā* itself. It did not mean "guidance" in the abstract sense; it meant more concretely "to show the way" particularly in the desert. *Hādi*—which is the participial form of the verb *hadā* "to guide"—in Jahiliyyah was a man with a specialized knowledge of all the possible ways in the desert, whose profession was to lead men in the right path until they reached safely their destination. Desert was an extremely dangerous place, and even the professional guides could at any moment

¹²) ʿAbid b. al-Abraṣ, *Diwān* XIV, 2.

¹³) v. 19.

go astray. And it was the source of infinite pride and joy for a man to have the consciousness that he was superior in this respect to the professional guides: 'Abid b. al-Abraş in one of his poems says boastfully:

هَذَا وَدَاوَةَ يَعْنِي الْهَدَاةَ بِهَا * نَائٍ مَسَافَتَهَا كَالْبُرْدِ دِيمُومَه
جَاوَزَتْهَا بَلَدَانَهُ

"Enough! (Let us change our subject.) Often an immense desert where even the professional guides (*budât* pl. of *hâdi*) lose their way, its expanse stretching far, its sand looking like stripes on a Yemen robe, a limitless desert, I crossed on a tall stout camel".¹⁴

From this we see how vitally important it was in those days for a man to be a good *hâdi* himself or at least to have an experienced and reliable *hâdi* with him. In the Koranic world, too, the concept of *hâdi* occupies a place of vital importance. Only, in the Koran, the *hâdi* is God Himself, the Guide who never goes astray, who is, therefore, absolutely reliable. Thus the Koran completely spiritualizes the concept; it transfers it from the sphere of the most material aspect of human life to the level of the religious conception of human life. It was originally a concept relating to the experience of real travelling in the desert. Now in the Koran it is a religious concept relating to the course of human life metaphorically taken as a vast desert that man has to travel across.

Quite naturally, the same thing happened to the concept of "way" itself. Thus *ṣirāṭ*¹⁵ and *sabīl* that are the most representative words for "way" in the Koran, are used evidently in a religious sense. The two are completely synonymous with each other in the Koran, and belong to the category of the key-terms that go to determine the basic structure of the Koranic Weltanschauung. In pre-Islamic times, too, the poets used these two words frequently, but always in a non-religious, material sense.

To say the truth, it is not the question of a few key-words taken separately. The whole semantic field of Way acquires in the Koran a deep symbolic meaning. The Koran, to put it in another way, transposes the entire conceptual field, with all the individual words that form it, from the material level of thinking to the religious level of thinking, spiritualizes it, and makes the meta-

14) *Diwān* XLI, vv. 12-13.

15) A very old borrowing from the Latin *strata* (i.e. *via strata* "paved way") meaning the so-called Roman road. The word appears in the *Diwān* of 'Abid b. al-Abraş in the plural form *ṣurūṭ* meaning just ordinary roads. The Jahili Arabs, in so far as we can judge from their literature, seem to have lost all memory of this etymology.

phorical system of concepts thus produced the very basis on which to build up its religious philosophy.

III THE WORSHIP AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

As already remarked, communication between God and man, verbal or non-verbal, is not a unilateral, but a bilateral, reciprocal phenomenon. Corresponding to the verbal type of communication from God to man, which is nothing but Revelation, there is *du'â* "(personal) prayer", conversation of the human heart with God, calling on God for His favor and aid, as the verbal type of communication in the ascending direction. In a similar way, the non-verbal Divine communication consisting in God's sending down the non-verbal *âyât*, has a human counterpart in the services of worship and the religious exercises known in Islam as *ṣalât*. In fact, *ṣalât* or the Worship is susceptible of being looked at from various points of view. But from the particular standpoint of the present study, it is the non-linguistic variety of communication in the ascending direction, i.e. from man to God, for it is a formalized "expression" on the part of man of the profound adoration which he feels in the presence of the Almighty. Man, instead of merely receiving the words and signs of God in a passive way, is strongly urged and commanded to express positively his feeling of adoration through a cycle of physical acts in company of others who share with him the same feeling.

Certainly *ṣalât* contains some verbal elements,¹⁶ because besides the prescribed bodily movements, reading from the Scripture, reciting the confession of faith (*shahâdah*), the benediction for the Prophet etc., constitute an important part of the Worship. But we must remark that the verbal elements i.e., words, are used here in quite a different way from the words in personal prayers (*du'â*), for in *ṣalât*, they are used ritualistically; all the words assume here a markedly ritualistic significance, while in *du'â* type of prayer, the words are used primarily for the expression *ad hoc* of strictly personal thoughts and

16) "The Worship consists of 'word' *qawf*, 'deed' *amal* and 'abstention', *imsâk*. (viz. from the forbidden acts)" (الملا: قول وعمل وامسك) *al-Shâfi'i, al-Risâlah*, §357, p. 121.

feelings calling for expression at a particular moment. A man in his *du'ā'*, in short, really "means" what he says. While in *ṣalāt*, the words he utters do not describe his own personal ideas, but are by nature symbolic in the sense that they form part of the ritual. The verbal elements in *ṣalāt* are not at all verbal in the ordinary sense of the word. Moreover, what is important here is the whole pattern of worship, which is something far more than verbal. It is, on the whole, a non-verbal way of communication from man to God; it is the human way of establishing direct contact with God through the prescribed form of ritual.

With Prophet Muhammad, *ṣalāt* seems to go back, in spirit not in name, to his pre-Islamic days. All the important Hadīths agree in asserting that Muhammad, following the practice of some of the devout Meccans, used to go in temporary seclusion from the worldly affairs to a cave on al-Ḥirā' near Mecca, every year for a certain number of days. And according to the traditional account, this had continued for several years before finally the Truth visited him and raised him as Apostle of God. In the Hadīths this is called *taḥammuth*. Although the etymology of this word is obscure, it is fairly certain that it meant some devotional exercises. And perhaps we may consider it the pre-Islamic stage of the *ṣalāt*.

Be that as it may, the *ṣalāt*, the ritual prayer or Worship, soon became one of the major institutions of Islam, and was given an exceedingly important place among the religious duties as a distinctive feature of the nascent Muslim community. It is not necessary here to go into the details of this institution.¹⁷ Let it suffice to note that *sujūd* (verb *sajada*) "prostration" which is the very culmination of this type of worship, and which consists in the believer's prostrating with his forehead touching the ground before the object to be worshipped, was known among the pre-Islamic Arabs as the form of expressing the deepest admiration heightened to the degree of adoration. The poet al-Nābighah, for instance, describing the enthralling beauty of a girl, says:¹⁸

أَوْ نَدْرَةٍ صَدَفِيَةٍ غَوَّاصَهَا * بَهَجٍ مَتَى بَرَهَا يُهْلُ وَيَسْجُدُ

.....

لَوْ أَنَّهَا عَرَضَتْ لِأَشْطَرِّ رَاهِبٍ * عَبْدَ إِلَهِ صُرُورَةٍ مُتَعَبِدٍ

"Or (she may be likened) to a large virgin pearl, before which the diver,

17) For such details, see E. E. Calverley, *Worship in Islam*, Madras, 1925.

18) Diwān, p. 52, v. 2, p. 54, v. 2.

in a glee, lifts up his voice in adoration and prostrates himself”.

“If such a girl showed herself to the eyes of a Christian monk with gray hair on his head, he would begin worshipping God (i.e. he would prostrate on the spot in admiration), even the monk who, unmarried, has spent all his life in pious devotion”.

As to the basic meaning of *ṣalât* we know that the verb *sallà* generally meant “to invoke blessings upon someone” in both the pre-Koranic and the post-Koranic literature.¹⁹ Here I give a very interesting example of its usage in pre-Islamic poetry.

The poet al-A'shà in describing how carefully wine is preserved, says:

وَقَابَلَهَا الرِّيحَ فِي دَنْيَا * وَصَلَّى عَلَى دَنْيَا وَارْتَمَ

“And (the wine-dealer) exposed it to the wind in a jar, then invoked blessings upon the jar and sought assistance from God (so that the wine might not turn sour)”.²⁰

But far more important than this for our purpose is the fact that already in Jahiliyyah the word was occasionally used to mean something which comes nearer to the Koranic concept of *ṣalât*.

Thus 'Antarah in a poem which he composed in praise of the great Emperor of the Persian Empire Anûshirwân has left this extremely interesting verse:²¹

نَصَلِّي نَعْوَهُ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ * مَلُوكُ الْأَرْضِ وَهَوَ لَهَا إِمَامٌ

“All the kings of the earth pay homage to him from all places of the world (lit. from every valley-path); all people on earth turn their face towards him”.

The word *imâm* as used in this verse is interesting. It means the point upon which your gaze is turned and concentrated. In this sense it is synonymous with one of the most important Koranic terms in the field of *ṣalât*: *al-qiblah* which means technically the direction to be faced in public worship. Significantly enough, the same poet actually uses the word *qiblah* precisely in this sense in reference to the same Emperor Anûshirwân;²²

يَا قِبْلَةَ الْقَصَادِ يَا تَاجَ الْعُلَا *

19) صَلَّى عَلَى فُلَانٍ = دَعَا لَهُ يَغْنِيهِ، بَارَكَهُ : IX, v. 85/84; IX, v. 104/103; XXXIII, v.

42/43 may be adduced as some of the Koranic examples.

20) Cf. *Lisân al-'Arab*, XII, p. 242; *irtasama* means “to pray to God for protection”. but according to Abû Hanifah, the verb here means “to seal up the jar tightly”.

21) *Diwân*, p. 164, v. 16.

22) *Diwân*, p. 171, v. 8.

Quşşâd is the plural of *qâşid* "one who aims at something", "one who intends to go towards something". So the sentence means—addressing the Emperor—"Oh you the direction to which the gaze of all people is turned, Oh you, crown of sublimity!"

As is evident, here the material content of *şalât* is different from the Islamic *şalât*, but the formal structure is the same; the only difference consists in the fact that here the *qiblah*, instead of being the direction of Meccan Shrine, is the imperial palace of the Persian Emperor, and the worship itself is the Imperial cult, instead of being the divine cult of Allâh.

CHAPTER VII

COMMUNICATIVE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN (II) —LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION—

I GOD'S SPEECH (*KALAM ALLAH*)¹

The communicative relation between God and man in the Koranic view is, to repeat what has been pointed out several times, basically twofold: (1) from God to man and (2) from man to God. In the previous chapter we have dealt with the non-verbal type. As I said there, the verbal type which is going to be the subject of the present chapter, is in the last analysis but a particular case of the more general phenomenon of God-man communication represented in a typical way by the non-verbal category.. This being the case, what has been said about the fundamental structure of the non-verbal communication applies *in toto* to the verbal one, as far as concerns the God→man side of the matter. In other words, Revelation is nothing but a very particular case of the "sending down" of the *âyât*. Only, Revelation stands out so clearly and distinctly from all other forms of "sending down" that it demands to be treated separately as an independent category. And this is also the Koranic view on this question. In the Koran, Revelaton is given a very special place. It is treated there as something extraordinary, something mysterious, the secret of which cannot be disclosed to the ordinary human mind. Hence the necessity of the intermediary called "Prophet". In this respect, the *âyât* which God sends down in this special form are wholly different from all other *âyât*, which are "natural" and, therefore, accessible to any human being who is possessed of the normal capacity of "right understanding".

1) The part of this chapter which concerns the problem of Revelation in the Koran appeared earlier as a separate article in *Studies in Medieval Thought*, Journal of the Japanese Society of Medieval Philosophy (Vol. V, 1962) under the title of "Revelation as a Linguistic Concept in Islam". But the chapter is not an exact reproduction of the article, although the problems treated as well as the main argument remain in the nature of the case substantially the same.

We may point out as one of the most characteristic and distinguishing marks of the three great religions of Semitic origin, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the view common to all of them that the very historical source, the ultimate guarantee, of the Truth of the religious experience of the believers lies in the initial fact of God's having revealed Himself to human beings. And Revelation means in Islam that God "spoke", that He revealed Himself through language, and that not in some mysterious non-human language but in a clear, humanly understandable language. This is the initial and the most decisive fact. Without this initial act on the part of God, there would have been no true religion on earth according to the Islamic understanding of the word religion.

It is no wonder, then, that Islam should have been from the very beginning extremely language conscious. Islam arose when God spoke. The whole Islamic culture made its start with the historic fact that man was addressed by God in a language which he himself spoke. This was not a simple matter of God's having "sent down" a sacred Book. It meant primarily that God "spoke". And this is precisely what 'Revelation' means. Revelation is essentially a linguistic concept.

Now Revelation in this sense has, within the Koranic contexts, two different, but equally important, aspects. One of them concerns its being a "speech" (*kalâm*) concept, in the narrow technical sense of the term "speech" as distinguished from "language" (*lisân*). The other has to do with the fact that of all the cultural languages that were available at that time the Arabic language was chosen by God by design and not by accident—as the Koran emphasizes in several places—as the means of divine speech. Using the Saussurian terminology we may distinguish between these two aspects by saying that the former is the *parole*-side, while the latter is the *langue*-side of the problem, *kalâm* and *lisân* in Arabic being roughly equivalent to the French *parole* and *langue* respectively. Both of these aspects will come to have grave cultural repercussions later in the history of Islamic thought, the significance of which will be made clear as we go on. Let us first concentrate our attention on the *parole*-aspect of Revelation.

We shall begin by remarking that Revelation, according to the Koranic conception of the phenomenon, is God's *parole*: Revelation (*wahy*)=God's speech (*kalâm Allâh*). Far from being an arbitrary interpretation, this is actually the paraphrase which we meet with frequently in the Koran. And, as will be easy to imagine, the fact is very significant in regard to the subject of this chapter. Just one or two examples from the Koran may suffice to make

this point convincing. Thus in *Sûrah al-Taubah* we read:²

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ

"If anyone of the polytheists comes to you (O Muhammad) seeking thy protection as a client, make him thy client so that he may have the chance of hearing God's speech (*kalâm Allâh*)".

Here it is contextually evident that "God's speech" refers to what God has spoken and said to the Prophet, i.e., words revealed to him. Likewise in *Sûrah al-Baqarah*, in reference to the revelation of the Mosaic Law it is said:³

أَفَتَعْظَمُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يَحْرِفُونَهُ مِنْ
بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

"Can you have any hope that they (i.e. the Jews) will submit to you when a party of them used to listen to God's speech (*kalâm Allâh*), then changed it arbitrarily and consciously after they had understood it?"

The very possibility of turning "Revelation" into a more analytic form of "God's speech" shows most clearly that this phenomenon has semantically two different points of emphasis: (1) God and (2) speech. In other words, the concept has two bases on which it stands.

When particular emphasis is put on the first basis, i.e., God, and the whole phenomenon viewed from that side, the concept of Revelation is signified by a certain class of words that cannot properly be applied to any aspect of the ordinary and normal human speech behavior, like *tanzil* "sending down", *wahy* etc. *Tanzil* can never be used in reference to an occurrence of speech act between man and man. The 'basic' meaning of the word, in which, in this case, etymology makes itself felt with particular clearness, forbids it to be applied except to supernatural communication. For the root from which the word is derived, *NZL*, means "descending", and *tanzil*, therefore, has the meaning of "causing (something) to go down". As regards *wahy*, we may notice that it is sometimes used in reference to human communication, or indeed, for that matter, even to animal communication as often happens in pre-Islamic poetry, but even in such cases, the word can be used only when the communication in question, whether human or animal, occurs in an extraordinary situation, and it is always accompanied by a sense of secrecy and mysteriousness. This point will be examined later in more detail, when we come to the problem of the

2) IX, v. 6.

3) II, v. 70/75.

meaning structure of this important word in the Koran.

It suffices to remark at the moment that Revelation, when looked at from this angle, is not a speech act in the natural and ordinary sense of the word. And if we go a step further and place an absolute emphasis on this first basis of the concept, Revelation becomes a theological mystery, incapable of being grasped by human analytic thought. The phenomenon of Revelation, in this respect, is something essentially mysterious, that does not allow of analysis; it is something only to be believed in.

We should not forget, however, that the concept of Revelation has another and equally important basis, which renders it capable of being analyzed in a normal way. Revelation, as I have suggested above, is semantically equal to "God's speech". If, instead of putting an exclusive emphasis on the first constituent, we view the matter from the angle of the second element, we realize at once that Revelation is, after all, a kind of "speech". Otherwise, the Koran would not have used the word *kalâm* "speech" in describing Revelation.

It is difficult, then, to resist the conclusion that, although, in so far as it is God's speech Revelation is something mysterious and has nothing in common with ordinary human linguistic behavior, in so far as it is *speech*, it must have all the essential attributes of human speech. In fact, the Koran uses also other words in reference to Revelation, that are most commonly applied to ordinary, commonplace products of speech: *kalimah* meaning "word" for example, in Sûrah *al-Shûrâ*:⁴

وَيَمْحُ اللَّهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ

"And God will wipe out the Falsehood and establish the Truth as Truth with his words".

Qaul is another word of this kind; it is evidently of the commonest of all terms relating to the human speech behavior. *Qâla*, i.e. "someone said something", is one of the words that have most frequently been used in Arabic from the earliest time of its history until to-day. The word *qâla* is so commonplace that it needs almost no explanation. The word is there; and everybody understands its meaning. In connection with the topic under discussion, it is important to note that in the Koran God Himself often uses this word in reference to the content of His own Revelation.

Thus in Sûrah *al-Muzammil*, God, addressing Muhammad, says:⁵

4) XLII, v. 23/24.

5) LXXIII, v. 5.

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا

"Verily, We are going to cast upon thee a weighty word!"

It should be noticed that here God refers to His own Revelation by means of a word which is the commonest of all words for human speech act, *qaul*, though, to be sure, it is qualified in this verse by a very strong adjective meaning "weighty" or "heavy" (*thaqil*)

The conclusion to be drawn from this brief consideration is that, although Revelation in itself is a phenomenon that goes beyond all comparison and defies all analysis, yet there is a certain respect in which we can approach it analytically, and try to discover the basic structure of its concept by considering it an extreme; or rather, an exceptional case of the general linguistic behavior common to all beings that "speak" at all.

What makes Revelation such a particular non-natural kind of linguistic phenomenon is that in it the speaker is God and the hearer is a man. This means that speech occurs here between the supernatural order of being and the natural order of being, so that there is no ontological balance or equilibrium between speaker and hearer. In the normal give and take of words, both the speaker and the hearer exist on the same level of being, standing on the footing of ontological equality. A human being speaks to and is understood by another human being. There can be no linguistic communication between a man and, say, a horse, except as a metaphor, because, between a man and an animal, however intelligent the latter may be, there is no equality in regard to the level of being. The utmost that can be produced between the two partners in such a case is a non-verbal or extra-linguistic exchange of signs. The poet 'Antarah offers an extremely interesting example regarding this problem.

In the well-known verses of his *Mu'allaqah*-Ode, he describes in a most touching and pathetic way his experience of such a non-verbal communication between himself and his horse. The intimate—almost personal, we should say—relation between the poet and the horse has been proverbial among the Arabs.

In these verses 'Antarah depicts the tragic death of his beloved horse on the battle-field. Already the horse is mantled in blood. With several spears stuck in the breast, the horse flinches and turns aside, being no longer able to spring forward toward the enemy. "Then he complained to me with gushing tears and sad whimpering. Had he but known what it was to exchange words, he would have described his pains, had he but known how to speak he would have spoken to me".⁶

6) *Al-Mu'allaqât*, ed. Fr. Aug. Arnold (Septem Mo'allakât), Leipzig, 1850, vv. 68-69.

A man and an animal cannot communicate with each other linguistically for two closely related reasons: (1) lack of a common sign-system between them and (2) essential difference of an ontological nature. Stated thus abstractly, the same thing is true of the theoretic impossibility of verbal communication between God and man, for here too there is no common sign-system between the two, and an essential ontological difference separates them from each other.

However, in the case of the Koranic Revelation, the first hindrance regarding a common sign-system was removed by the fact that the Arabic language was chosen by God Himself as the common sign-system between God and man. But the second, ontological, hindrance was not of such a nature that it could be removed so easily. Hence the extraordinariness of this phenomenon. For here genuine linguistic communication does occur between two levels of being that are worlds apart and between which lies an infinite distance of essential separation. And yet God speaks to man, and man hears the words and understands them. And that is Revelation. How should we account for this extraordinary phenomenon? Or rather, how did the Arabs themselves of that age experience it and what kind of conception did they form for themselves of this strange happening? That will be our main concern in the first half of this chapter.

But before we begin to grapple with this difficult problem, we must try to analyze the original meaning of the word *wahy*, which is admittedly by far the most important of all words in Arabic denoting the phenomenon of Revelation.

II THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE WORD *WAHY*

Fortunately, the word *wahy* is one of those that are used repeatedly in pre-Islamic poetry, and this facilitates very much the analysis of the original, that is, pre-Koranic, structure of the concept. From various examples of its usage I would isolate as its essential semantic conditions the following three points.

(1) It is 'communication', in the first place. In order to smooth the way for analysis, I would like to introduce at this point a new methodological concept: 'two-person-relation word', and begin by saying that 'communication' in

general belongs semantically to the class of two-person-relation words. What does this mean? Let me first explain briefly what I mean by a 'two-person-relation word'. The conception, as we shall see presently, plays an exceedingly important role in the analysis of the semantic structure of Revelation.

In analyzing word meanings in general, we find it often very useful to begin by paying attention to the 'number' of persons involved, the word 'person' in this context being taken in the sense of *dramatis personae*. In other words, it is often important for us to know, as a first step in semantical analysis, how many persons—actors—should be there on the stage in order that the event denoted by the word might actually occur. This is of course restricted only to those cases where the idea of 'person' is involved in the basic structure itself of the meaning. A table is there, for example, for people to sit at, and books are there for people to read, but the meaning structure of "table" or "book" does not contain the idea of 'person' as one of its primary and essential constituents.

What I mean by a 'two-person-relation word' will be best understood after these general remarks, if one compares with each other the two simple sentences "I eat" and "I blame". The verb in the first sentence is a 'one-person-word' while the verb in the second sentence is a 'two-person-relation word'. I have chosen intentionally the verbs "eat" and "blame", both of which are so-called 'transitive' verbs, to show that the semantical distinction we are now talking about is something apparently similar to, but in reality quite different from, the grammatical distinction between the transitive and the intransitive.

Both "eat" and "blame" are transitive verbs, and yet the former is a 'one-person' word, while the second is a 'two-person' word. In the case of "eating", only one person is required to be on the stage. Of course, there may be more than one person, but that is something quite accidental and of only secondary significance as far as the basic semantic structure of "eating" is concerned. There is one actor on the stage; he eats, and this is all that is required in order that there may be an occurrence of the verb "eat".⁷ This kind of words I would call 'one-person' words. In the case of the verb "blame", on the contrary, there must be two persons on the stage. The act called "blaming"

7) Be it remarked in passing that there is in Arabic a special grammatical means of transforming regularly such a word into a 'two-person' word. It is what is generally known under the name of the third derivative form, or the *fā'ala*-form. In contrast to *akala* "eat", *ākala* requires two persons on the stage: somebody eats together with somebody else at the same table.

cannot in the nature of the case actually occur unless there are at least two persons. If there is no one else, the actor blames himself, if he does blame at all. And this is also, structurally, a two-person-relation, the actor playing a double role.

Coming back to the word in question *wahy*, we observe, in the light of this explanation, that it is a two-person-relation term. There must be, in other words, two persons on the stage in order that the event which is called *wahy* may actually take place. Let us call them *A* and *B*. In this process *A* acts actively ($A \rightarrow B$), and the act itself is the transmission of *A*'s will and thought by means of a sign or signs. And there can be here no reciprocity, that is to say, the relation, once established, cannot absolutely be reversed. It is strictly unilateral communication.

(2) It is not necessarily verbal. That is to say, the signs used for the purpose of communication are not always linguistic, though words may also be used.

(3) There is always a sense of mysteriousness, secrecy, and privacy. In other words, this type of communication is esoteric, so to speak. The communication is strictly a private matter between *A* and *B*. *A* makes himself perfectly clear to *B*, but to *B* only. There is a perfect communication between them, but it is made in such a way that the context of communication is difficult to understand for the outsiders.

With these three essential conditions in mind let us examine closely one interesting example, and see how *wahy* looks like when the conceptual structure just explained becomes materialized. The example is from one of the well-known odes of 'Alqamah al-Fahl a first-rate poet of pre-Islamic times:⁸

بُوحِيَ إِلَيْهَا بِإِنْقَاضِ رَنْتَقَةٍ * كَمَا تَرَاطُنُ فِي أُنْدَانِهَا الرُّومُ

The poet is here describing, with a pleasant touch of humor coming from personification, the home-coming of a male ostrich. This male ostrich has gone far away from home in search of food. Suddenly, on a rainy and windy day, he remembers "his wife and children"—i.e. the female ostrich and the eggs—whom he has left at home. The rain somehow makes him feel anxious about them, and he begins to run as fast as he can toward his home. He comes back; and there he finds his family safe and in peace. Relieved of his anxiety he begins to talk to his wife delightfully. He is saying something to her. What is he saying? No one knows besides themselves: it is a secret between the two.

8) *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, CXX, v. 28.

This is the situation which the poet is trying to convey. He says:

"The male ostrich is talking to her (*yûhî*, a verbal form corresponding to our *wahy*) with cracking sounds (*inqâd*, which is the 'ostrich language') and with *naqnaqah* (an onomatopoeic representation of the 'cracking of the ostrich'), just like the Greeks talk with each other in an incomprehensible language (*tardâtanu*) in their castles".

The word *tardâtanu* (for *tatarâtanu*) in this context is very important for our purpose. The basic verb *ratana*, of which *tatarâtanu* is a derivative form, consists semantically of two fundamental elements. One is the idea of the speaker's being a foreigner, that is, a non-Arab, whose mother-tongue is some non-Arabic language. And the second is that it is completely incomprehensible to an Arab hearer. The derivative form *tardâtanu* turns the combination of these two elements into a 'two-person-relation', with an additional idea of reciprocity so that it produces in our mind the image of foreigners talking with each other in some incomprehensible language. Whenever such a thing happened among the Arabs, quite naturally they got very suspicious. In the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, one of the Canonical Collections of the Hadîths, for example, it is related that a young Greek was once seen talking to a Greek woman married to an Arab "in their own incomprehensible language",⁹ and that this was immediately taken as conclusive evidence that there was a secret and illicit relationship between the two.

In the light of this information, the second half of this verse would seem to give an important clue as to how we should understand the key-word in the first half, *yûhî*, that, in short, *wahy*. Suppose two persons are talking with each other in your presence with an air of intimacy in a foreign language which you do not understand. You are sure that between the two persons there is a perfect communication of ideas and sentiments going on, but you cannot penetrate into the content itself of the communication, because you are an outsider. You are completely shut out from their intimacy. And this naturally arouses the sense of witnessing something mysterious.

That the semantic structure of the word *wahy* contains an element of mysteriousness coming from incomprehensibility may be shown by another fact. In pre-Islamic poetry the word *wahy* is very often used to mean "writing", "letters" or "characters". Thus Labid in his *Mu'allaqah*-Ode, speaking of the remains of the old abode of his beloved, long deserted by the inhabitants,

9) رَأَيْنَاهَا يَلِيَانَهُ , Hadith No. 416, *Musnad*, vol. I, Cairo, 1949.

says that its trace has not yet been completely erased; it still remains "like characters" (*wuḥiyy*, pl. of *wahy*).¹⁰

Likewise al-Marrâr b. Munquidh, a poet of the first century of Islam:

وَرَرَى مِنْهَا رُسُومًا قَدْ عَفَتْ * مِثْلَ حَظِّ اللَّامِ فِي وَحْيِ الزُّرِّ

"Now you see only some faint traces (of the old abode) just like the letter L in the writing of books".¹¹

The Arabic lexicons usually give two different meanings to this word *wahy*: (1) revelation and (2) letters, as if there were no connection at all between the two. This view overlooks the very important fact that for the pre-Islamic Arabs, who were mostly completely illiterate, letters were something very mysterious. We know how they were struck with astonishment by the strange—so they felt—South Arabian characters engraved on the rocks. It was the time when the word *qalam* "pen" still carried unusually grave and deep implications as is shown by the fact that the word occurs in one of the oath-formulas which characterize the earliest Sûrahs of the Koran.

وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ

"By the Pen, and what they inscribe (therewith)"?¹²

Again, in another important passage, the same word appears assuming a symbolic meaning:

إِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

"Recite: And they Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the Pen, taught man that which he did not know (before)".¹³

The written letters were signs of something, all Arabs knew it very well. The written letters were there to convey some meaning, but most of the pre-Islamic Arabs did not know what those signs conveyed. They were to their minds something mysterious. "Communication" coupled with the sense of "mysteriousness"—this was the connotation of writing at that time. Thus understood, the two allegedly different meanings of the word *wahy* are, far from

10) More literally: "as if their rocks contained characters" (*Mu'allaqab*, v. 2).

(كُنَّا قَدِمْنَ الْوَحْيِ يَتَنَمَّ)

11) *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyât*, XVI, v. 56. See also 'Antarah, *Diwân*, p. 190, v. 7, where we read: "(as faint) as characters on the parchments dating from the reign of Kisrâ".

(كَوَحْيِ صَفَائِبٍ مِنْ مَقَدِيرِ كِسْرَى)

12) LXVIII, v. 1; note that the Sûrah itself is entitled *al-Qalam* "the Pen".

13) XCVI, vv. 4-5.

being different from each other, just one and the same thing.

In regard to this idea of mysterious way of communication conveyed by the word *wahy*, attention may be drawn to the existence of a very interesting example in the Koran. To be more strict, it is not so much a 'mysterious' as 'non-natural' way of communication. Still, in any case, the basic idea is the same.

In the Sûrah *Maryam*¹⁴ Zakariyyâ is made dumb and speechless for three days as a sign (*âyah*) of God's special favor. There we read:

فَخَرَجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ مِنَ الْمِحْرَابِ فَأَوْحَى إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْ سَبِّحُوا بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا

"Then he came out unto his people from the sanctuary and signified (*awhâ*, the same word as *yûhi-wahy*) to them: Glorify (your Lord) morning and evening".

Under ordinary natural conditions the Koran might have used the word *qâla* "he said" or *amara* "he ordered". But Zakariyyâ is temporarily dumb; he cannot say anything. So he makes a signal to his people, not by words but by gesture. The purpose of communicating ideas is achieved here in an unusual way. This is what is implied by the word *wahy* in this passage.

The example is interesting because it is an extremely rare case in which both *A* and *B* who are involved in the two-person-relation of *wahy* are human beings. Normally in the Koran, only one of the two persons, *B*, who receives the communication is a human being. *A* is God Himself. For example:

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنِ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ

"And We—the speaker is God—signified (*awhâynâ*, from *wahy*) to Moses. Throw down your stick!"¹⁵

Similar examples abound in the Koran. It is important to remark that the *wahy* at this stage is not yet "Revelation" in the proper, technical sense of the word. At this stage the word *wahy* is a synonym of *ilhâm*, "inspiration (of a more general, non-verbal nature)". The usage of the word *wahy* in this sense would suggest that God communicates His Will to a human being directly, putting no intermediary between them (*A*→*B*); only, this is done without any linguistic formulation of the thought. God, in this case, works upon the human mind in such a way that the latter understands the will of God immediately. "Revelation" in the proper, Koranic sense, is, besides being a verbal process, something more than a simple two-person relation; it is a three-person-

14) XIX, v. 12/11.

15) VII, v. 114/117.

relation, or even a four-person-relation. This we shall see presently.

But before turning to this problem, it may be well to notice, in connection with the question of the direct two-person communication between God and man, that in the Koran Moses occupies a very unusual position. It would seem that of all the Prophets recognized as such in the Koran Moses is allowed to enjoy a special privilege in this respect. Quite exceptionally, God even "speaks" to Moses directly—the word used being *kallama*. This word is a transitive verbal form of *kalām* "speech" (*parole*) to which reference was made at the beginning of this chapter, and implies definitely a two-personal verbal relation between *A* and *B*.

For instance, in the Sûrah *al-A'raf*,¹⁶ Moses goes up, alone, the Mount Sinai to meet God—one of the well-known Biblical scenes. There "the Lord spoke to Moses (*kallama-hu*) in complete seclusion from all other human beings. And in the Sûrah *al-Nisâ*, we read:¹⁷

وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا

"And Apostles of whom We have told thee before and Apostles of whom We have not yet told thee. And unto Moses God spoke directly (*kallama takliman*)".

In another passage,¹⁸ the same Sinai scene is described in a different way, that is, in terms of different concepts:

وَنَادَيْنَاهُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا

"And We—the speaker is God—called to him from the right side of the mount (Sinai) and let him come near in order to have a personal talk with him".

The verse here quoted is remarkable in that it uses two interesting linguistic concepts which, if interpreted rightly, would provide a clue to a very important aspect of the phenomenon of *wahy*. The two concepts of which I am now talking are *nâddâ* and *najjî*.

The verb *nâddâ* is in meaning roughly the same as *kallama*, the only difference being that the concept signified by the former is specially conditioned in terms of the space relation between *A* and *B*: it means, *A* speaks to *B*, *A* being in a far-off place. It means "to talk to somebody from afar"; there is always the element of a long distance involved between *A* and *B* in this concept. In this sense, it is the contrary of *waswasa* "to whisper into another's ear" which

16) VII, v. 139/143.

17) IV, v. 162/164.

18) XIX, v. 52/53.

we shall discuss later. *Waswasa* implies the shortest possible distance between *A* and *B*. "Long distance between *A* and *B* naturally necessitates that *A* should speak in a loud voice, while in the case of *waswasa*, *A* speaks to *B* in a low muffled voice.

Examples of *nâdâ* abound in pre-Islamic poetry. Here I give one of them. which seems to make the basic structure of the concept particularly clear.

إِذَا مَا أَقْتَمْنَا لَمْ نَخَافِ بِجَنَّةٍ * وَلَكِنْ نُنَادِي مِنْ بَعِيدٍ أَلَا أَرْكَبُ

"When we go out hunting, we never try to deceive (animals) by wearing camouflage (i.e. the running-down of the quarry is so certain). On the contrary, we cry out from afar: Get on your horse!"¹⁹

As regards the second word *najîy*, we must notice, first of all, that it refers to the particular status of *B* in the *A* → *B* relation of linguistic communication. It means *B* as a person standing in a particularly intimate personal relationship with the speaker *A*. It is the "confidant," to whom *A* can safely confide all his secrets and completely unbosom himself. This kind of confidential talk is called in Arabic *munâjât*, which is derived from the same root as *najîy*. This is also specially conditioned in terms of the distance between *A* and *B*; the use of the word usually suggests that the speaker and the hearer stand very close to each other—hence *qarrabnâ* ("We let him come near") in the Koranic text just quoted.

All this would seem to suggest that Moses in this respect was given a very special divine favor. The Koran itself emphasizes very much this fact, as is evident from the Sûrah *al-Baqarah*, where we read:²⁰

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ

19) 'Alqamah al-Fahl, from the famous ode which he composed in competition with Imr' al-Qays, v. 29. For Koranic examples of *nâdâ* see VII, v. 42/44, where the People of the Garden (*ashâb al-jannah*) address words (*nâdâ*) to the People of the Fire (*ashâb al-nâr*), the distance between the two groups being of course the longest imaginable; VII, v. 21/24; V, v. 53/58; LXVIII, vv. 21-24; LXIII, v. 9; XLIX, v. 4, etc. The only apparent exception is L, v. 40/41, which reads: "وَاسْتَمِعْ يَوْمَ يُنَادِي النَّادِ مِنْ تَحْتِى قَرِيبٍ" "And listen on the day when the Caller (*munâdî*) shall call (*yunâdî*) from a near place (*makânin qaribin*)". But a little reflection will be sufficient to show that precisely this combination of the seemingly contradictory concepts produces a striking stylistic effect. For the verse refers to a really "exceptional" case. It describes the coming of the Day of Resurrection, when the Caller, i.e., the Angel, calls all people out of their graves to drive them to the place of Judgment. To the ears of the dead who hear the cry, the call gives an extraordinary impression as if somebody were calling them in a large voice from a distant place, which is, strangely enough, so close to them.

20) II, v. 254/255.

"Those Apostles, some of them We have caused to excel others. Among them there is one to whom God Himself spoke (*man kallama Allāhu*), and some there are whom He has raised in rank".

It is in this sense that the later theologians called Moses *kalīm Allāh*, meaning thereby a man upon whom God bestowed a special favor by speaking to him directly.

It will be worth remarking further that in this two-person ($A \rightarrow B$) relation, if A happens to be not God but Shayṭān (Satan or Demon), then the communication is not usually called *waḥy*, but *waswasah*²¹ "whispering". But structurally these two are not entirely different from each other. Besides the difference in regard to the "distance" between A and B , which we have seen above, the only main difference between them lies in the "source" of the supernatural communication: in one case it comes from Gd, while in the other it is *Shayṭān* who happens to be the source of inspiration. Semantically, *waswasah* is contained as a small sector within the larger field of *waḥy*. This is shown by the fact that the Koran uses sometimes the verb *awḥa* (*waḥy*) exactly in the particular sense of *waswasa*.²²

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ تُتَوَرَّأَ شَيْطَانِينَ الْإِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ زُخْرَفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا

"Likewise We have appointed to each one of the Prophets an enemy—Demons, whether of humankind or jinn, who inspire (*yūḥī*) in one another words adorned with false embellishments, beguiling one another."

وَإِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلَى أَوْلِيَائِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوكُمْ

"Verily, the Demons are inspiring (*yūḥūna*) their companions (i.e. the Kāfirs) to dispute with you (i.e. Muslims)"²³

Coming back to the word *waswasa*, it is worth noticing that, in the Koranic conception, the human soul itself plays sometimes the role of the Shayṭān, as we see from the *Sûrah Qāf*,²⁴ where we read:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ

"We created man, and We know what his soul whispers (*tuwaswisu*, from *waswasa*) to him".

Usually in cases like this, the word connotes something mysterious, said in

21) VII, v. 19/20; CXIV, vv. 5-6.

22) VI, v. 112/113.

23) VI, v. v. 121.

24) L, v. 15/16.

a low, whispering tone, which deranges and agitates the mind and puts into it an alluring temptation. A'shà al-Akbar²⁵ uses the word in describing the clattering sound of bracelets and ankle-rings as the beautiful girl Hurayrah walks away gracefully, which entices him and stirs up in his heart an irresistible passion:

تَسْمَعُ لِلْحَلِيِّ وَسَوَاسًا إِذَا أَنْصَرَفَتْ * كَمَا أَسْتَعَانَ بِرِيحٍ عِشْرِقٍ رَجُلٍ

"You hear the tempting sound (*waswās*) of her ornaments as she walks away, a sound just like a rustling 'ishbriq-tree when the wind blows through its (leaves) [lit.: when it (i.e. the tree) seeks help from a wind]".

Interestingly enough this verse of the great poet seems to respond to a Koranic verse,²⁶ in which the pious Muslim women are admonished not to do anything that is likely to provoke men's lust.

وَلَا تَقْرُبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُظْهَرَ مَا يُخْفَيْنَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ

"Let them not stamp their feet so as to be known (i.e. so as to disclose) the ornaments (i.e. the ankle-rings) which they hide".

This is a very well-known verse and is often quoted in Islam as a ground for prohibiting dancing. The commentator al-Bayḍāwī says that the clattering (*taqa'qu'*) of ankle-rings is likely to excite lust in men.

Thus understood, the Koranic verse throws an illuminating light on A'shà's description of Hurayrah, and consequently, on the very nature of the concept of *waswasah*.

III THE SEMANTICAL STRUCTURE OF REVELATION

I turn now to the Koranic concept of Revelation (*wahy*) in the proper technical sense, with a view to analyzing it from the semantical point of view. This will be done by isolating one by one all the essential conditions under which the word standing for that concept is naturally and properly elicited.²⁷

To put it in a more plain language: When and in what kind of concrete situation is the word *wahy* actually used in the Koran? What are the strictly necessary conditions which, when fulfilled, will enable one to use this word

25) *Diwān*, VI, 4.

26) XXIV, v. 31.

27) I owe this methodological idea to Prof. Ernst Leisi, which he first exposed systematically in his book *Der Wortinhalt, Seine Struktur im Deutschen und Englischen*, Heidelberg, 1953.

properly? To give a detailed analytic answer to this basic question will be the main task of this section.

The first essential condition is the most general one. Revelation is a concrete speech behavior (*kalām*) which corresponds to *la parole* in the terminology of modern linguistics. The *parole* is, in Saussurian terminology, linguistic communication which takes place in a concrete situation between two persons, one of whom plays an active role, and the other a passive role ($A \rightarrow B$). And this is exactly what is meant by the Arabic word *kalām*. In this respect *wahy* is a partial and more particular concept falling under the general concept of *kalām*. And this implies that all the semantical conditions of the word *wahy*, which it will be our task to isolate, should be such as bring out the specific characteristics of *wahy* which contribute towards making it a particular concept within the wider field of *kalām*.

Now in regard to this first condition, there are two important points to note; namely, first, that it is essential to any act of speech, that is, *parole qua parole*, that both *A* and *B* should resort to one and the same system of signs, which is, as we saw earlier, nothing other than what is called to-day in French *langue* corresponding to the Arabic *lisān*. In other words, in order that there might be an effective linguistic communication, *A* should speak the language which is comprehensible to *B*. In normal cases both *A* and *B* belong to one and the same language community. Otherwise, *A* should speak the language of *B*, or at least he should use some foreign language which happens to be comprehensible to both of them. In the Koranic Revelation God (*A*) talks to Muhammad (*B*) in *B*'s language, that is Arabic. The problems relating to the use of Arabic as the language of Revelation in Islam will be dealt with more fully in the section IV.

The second point is that it is essential that *A* and *B* should stand on the same level of being, that they should belong to the same category of being. In the case of Revelation—and here begins the real characteristic of the concept of Revelation—this basic rule is violated. For *A* and *B*, i.e., God and man, are quite different from each other with regard to the order of being. Here most evidently *A* and *B* do not stand horizontally on the same level of being. The relation is vertical: *A* stands above, representing the highest level of being, and *B* stands below, representing a far lower level of being.

This ontological situation plays an exceedingly important part in the structure of the Koranic concept of Revelation. Let us, then, isolate this as the second essential condition of this concept and direct our attention to the special

problems which it raises semantically. As I have said above, no linguistic communication can occur between *A* and *B* when there is this kind of ontological discrepancy between the two. In order that real linguistic communication might occur in spite of this basic rule of language, something extraordinary must happen to either *A* or *B*.

This point has been clearly grasped by some Muslim thinkers. Al-Kirmânî for instance, in his famous commentary on al-Bukkāri's Hadith-Collection says:²⁸ Revelation consists in verbal communication between God and man. But theoretically no exchange of words (*al-tahāwur*), nor teaching (*ta'lim*), nor learning (*ta'allum*) is possible unless there is realized between the two parties a certain kind of equality, i.e., the relation (*munāsabah*) of the speaker (*al-qā'il*) and the hearer (*al-sāmi'*).

How, then, is such an extraordinary relation realizable between God and man? There are, al-Kirmânî replies, two possible ways: either the hearer (*B*) should undergo a deep personal transformation under the overwhelming influence of the spiritual force of the speaker (*A*), or the speaker should come down and assume somehow the attribute of the hearer.

And he adds that both cases actually occurred with Muhammad. The auditory type of Revelation in which, as we see in the Hadith, Muhammad is reported to have heard some strange noise like the ringing of a bell or the humming of bees, exemplifies the first category. While the visionary type of Revelation, equally mentioned in the Hadith and the Koran, in which he is related to have seen the heavenly Messenger or Angel, belongs to the second category.

Opinions may differ on this last point. But in any case we must acknowledge that al-Kirmânî saw quite rightly the fundamental nature of speech, and that also he tried to interpret the fact of Revelation in terms of this basic principle.

However this may be, it is certain that the particular kind of *munāsabah* "relation" of which al-Kirmânî speaks can be established between a supernatural being and a man, if it is possible at all, only by a drastic transformation, a denaturalization, we might say, of the personality of the man. Here something beyond his power, something against his nature comes to pass forcibly in himself. This causes him most naturally the keenest pain and torture, not only

28) Shams al-Dīn Muhammad b. Yūsuf b. 'Alī al-Kirmânī (ob. 786 A.H.), *Sharḥ al-Bukhārī* Vol. I, Cairo, 1939, p. 28.

29) *al-Muqaddimah*, ed. al-Wāfi, Cairo, Vol. I, pp. 346-347, 360.

mental but also even physical. This happened to Muhammad in various forms. Hadīths tell us of his intense sufferings, physical pains, the feeling of being choked at those moments. 'A'ishah relates—and this is one of the most famous authentic Hadīths about Revelation—"I saw him as Revelation came down upon him on an extremely cold day. His forehead was running with beads of perspiration". Other Hadīths report that when the Revelation came, his face darkened; sometimes he fell to the ground as if intoxicated or swooning; sometimes he groaned like a camel-calf etc.

Ibn Khaldūn in his *Muqaddimah* explains this phenomenon in this way. This physical pain, he says, is due to the fact that in this supernatural experience, the human soul which is not by nature prepared to experience such a thing, is forced to leave momentarily its humanity (*al-bashariyyah* "human-ness") and exchanges it for angelicity (*al-malakiyyah* "angel-ness"), and becomes actually for the time being part of the angelic world until it resumes its human-ness.

But this is of course a theoretic or philosophical explanation of the phenomenon. This was not certainly the way the Arabs in Muhammad's time approached the problem. Indeed the pagan Arabs had ready at hand a very convincing—of course to their minds—way of interpreting this kind of phenomena.

We must keep in mind in this connection that we are as yet only at the second stage of our analysis. All we have established so far is that we have here a case of verbal communication coming from a supernatural being to a human being. Properly speaking, the problem of Who or What this supernatural being might be is not yet solved.

Now, if we stop at this stage—and the pagan Arabs did stop at the stage and obstinately refused to go any further—and look at the matter from the Jahili point of view, then the whole thing would appear to be just the very familiar phenomenon of possession (*tajnīn*), which is, in no way peculiar to the Arabs or the Semites, but something of the widest occurrence throughout the world and generally known in modern times under the name of shamanism. Some invisible supernatural being, whether a spirit or divinity, suddenly possesses an ecstatic person momentarily, and utters through him impassioned words, mostly in verse, which the man could never compose by himself in ordinary, i.e. non-ecstatic, moments.

This phenomenon was extremely familiar to the pre-Islamic Arabs. For the *kāhin* (soothsayer) was exactly this type of man who was liable to be possessed at any moment by a supernatural force. And this was the sole form

of verbal inspiration known to the pagan Arabs. The "poet" (*shā'ir*) also was, originally, this type of man.

Let us first examine the concept of "poet" in ancient Arabia as an "inspired" man. In doing this we must bear in mind the very important fact that the pre-Islamic poetry which has been preserved and handed down to us is mostly the product of the latter Jahili period, when the Arabic poetry had already passed long ago the cruder stage of primitive shamanism. By the time Islam appeared the poetry had already been elaborated and refined to a very great extent into an art, almost in the sense in which we usually understand the word to-day. The famous pre-Islamic poets, like Imr' al-Qays, Ṭarafah and others were no longer shamans; they were rather real artists.

And yet in their work there are some sporadic remains of the ideas belonging to the older stage, and particularly there is a branch of poetry called *al-hijā'*—a kind of satirical poetry, which is based precisely on this primitive idea of word-magic.³⁰

This *hijā'*-poetry, as was shown admirably well by Goldziher's now classical work on this branch of Arabian poetry,³¹ preserved even right into the Umayyad period the pre-historic shamanistic conception of poetry. Besides, we have also a huge amount of old oral traditions preserved in various books, which provide us with valuable material for studying the Arab conception of the poet and poetry in the earliest, unrecorded times.

What was poetry and what kind of man was a poet in the original form in Arabia, To make a long story short, the poet, as his very name *shā'ir*—it is a derivation from the verb *sha'ara*, or *sha'ura* meaning "to have cognizance of", i.e., in this case, of something to which ordinary people have no access—implies, was a person who had the first-hand knowledge of the unseen world. And this knowledge of the unseen world he was supposed to derive, not from his own personal observation, but from constant intimate commerce with some supernatural beings, called *Jinn*. Thus poetry at this stage was not so much an "art" as supernatural "knowledge" derived from direct communication with the unseen spirits who were believed to be hovering around in the air.

The *Jinn* did not communicate with everybody. Each had a special choice. When a *Jinn* found a man of his or her liking, he or she pounced upon him, threw him down to the ground, kneeled upon his chest, and forced him to become his mouthpiece in this world. This was the initiation ceremony of poetry.

30) On the problem of linguistic magic, see my *Language and Magic*, Tokyo, 1955.

31) *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie*, Erster Teil, Leiden, 1896, pp. 1-105.

The man, from that time on, was known as a "poet", in the full sense of the word. And there was established between the poet and the *Jinn* a particular kind of extremely intimate personal relationship. Each individual poet used to have his own *Jinn* who came down upon him from time to time to give him inspiration. The poet usually called his *Jinn* his "familiar friend" (*khalil*). Not only that; the *Jinn* who came into such an intimate relationship with a particular poet was even known by a proper name somewhat like John or Mary. For instance the *Jinn* of one of the greatest pre-Islamic poets al-A'shà al-Akbar had the personal name *Mishal*, the original meaning of which is "carving knife"—a name symbolic of his glib, eloquent tongue. This *Jinn* *Mishal* appears often in his poetry.

Here I will give only one example,³² which is particularly significant in connection with our present topic.

وَمَا كُنْتُ شَاحِرًا وَلَكِنْ حَبِيبِي * إِذَا مَسَحَلَّ سَلَى لِي الْقَوْلَ أَنْطَقُ
 شَرِيكَانِ فِيمَا بَيْنَنَا مِنْ هَوَادٍ * صَفِيَّانِ جَنِيٍّ وَإِنْسٍ مُوَفَّقُ
 يَقُولُ فَلَا أَعْيَى لَشَيْءٍ أَقُولُهُ * كَفَانِي لَا عَيْ وَلا هُوَ أَخْرَقُ

The situation is somewhat like this. The poet is being attacked by an enemy poet. He must make a counterattack: otherwise he would not only lose face personally, but he would let his whole tribe suffer a defeat according to the basic belief of the age. He feels irritated, impatient and uneasy, and yet somehow he cannot utter a word. As an excuse he describes his strange relationship with his *Jinn*, and says that he remains dumb and speechless in the face of his enemy, not because he is incompetent or ignorant, but simply and solely because his *Jinn* does not yet give him words.

He says: "I am not an inexperienced debutant³³ in the art of poetry, but my situation is like this: whenever *Mishal* bestows upon me the word I begin to be able to speak. Between us we are two intimate sincere friends; a *Jinn* and a human being who is naturally fit to him. If he only speaks (i.e. if he inspires me), then I will no longer be incapable of saying anything I would say. He suffices me so long as he is neither a tongue-tied one nor an awkward stupid fellow".

It is important to note in this connection that this kind of demonic inspiration was always felt by the poet to be something "coming down" from above, i.e., from the air. And for this aspect of poetic inspiration, the word *muzâl*

32) *Diwân*, XXXIII, vv. 32-34.

33) *Shâhird* "apprentice"—Pahlv. *ashâgard*, Mod. Persian *shâgird*.

A (Jinn) (verb *nazala* "to come down") was most generally used.³⁴ Thus, for example, Ḥassân Ibn Thâbit³⁵ describes his own poetic experience in this way:

B (shâ'ir) وَقَافِيَةٌ عَجَتْ بِلِيلٍ رَزِينَةٍ * تَلَقَّيْتُ مِنْ جَوِّ السَّمَاءِ نُزُولَهَا

"Oft did a grave and heavy verse (the word *qāfiyah* does not mean, in a context like this, simply 'rhyme' or 'rhyme word' as it does in later Arabic, but it rather means words endowed with a magical power by their being uttered in a poetic form—a sort of incantation, like the word *carmen* in Old Latin) resound at night; oft did I receive it as it came down (lit.: its coming down *nuzûl*) from mid-air".

To this we must add another important point, namely, that in the most ancient days of Arab heathenism known to us the position of the poet in the society was extremely high. A real poet was an inestimable tribal asset in peace as in war. In time of peace he was the leader of the nomad tribe, because of the supernatural knowledge he got from his *Jinn*. The wanderings of the tribe in the desert were regulated by instructions given by the chief shaman-poet of the tribe. In this sense, in the majority of cases *shâ'ir* was almost synonymous with *qā'id* "tribal leader". In war time he was considered to be even more powerful than a warrior because he had the supernatural power of disarming the enemy, even before the actual battle began, by curses and spells which he launched against the enemy in verse-form, and which, were believed to have far more terrible effects in bringing destruction and shame upon their target than arrows and spears. Such was the pre-Islamic conception of the poet although in the latter Jahili period just preceding the rise of Islam, the social position of the poet was no longer so high.

This makes us understand why the Prophet Muhammad was so often regarded by his contemporaries as a "poet inspired by a *Jinn*" (*shâ'ir majmûn*), as we know from the Koran itself.³⁶ The pagan Arabs stubbornly refused to see anything in Muhammad which would distinguish him from a person possessed and inspired by a *Jinn*. In their eyes, here was a man who claimed to have a knowledge of the "Unseen" (*al-ghayb*), brought to him by a supernatural being coming down from heaven (*nuzûl*). Whether that supernatural being be God, an Angel or a Shayṭân, there was no essential distinction at all in their

34) This reminds us of the Koranic expression *tanzîl* "sending down" of the *âyât*—from the same root NZL—which we discussed in the preceding chapter.

35) *Diwân*, ed. Hirschfeld, London, 1910, 79, the last verse.

36) XXVII, v. 36. The word *majmûn* literally means "one possessed by a *Jinn*".

conception; all were *Jinn*.

The Koran tells us that the pagan Arabs could hardly differentiate Allâh from the *Jinn*. For instance, in the Sûrah *al-Şâffât* we read:

جَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا

"They set up between Allâh and the *Jinn* a kinship".³⁷ In other words, in their conception both Allâh and the *Jinn* belong in one and the same family.

Moreover, this man, Muhammad, showed in moments of prophetic inspiration evident signs of intense physical pain and mental sufferings. So here was, they thought, another *shâ'ir*—a man possessed by a *Jinn*,³⁸ this was their natural immediate conclusion.

That such was the most prevalent and most widespread view among the pagan Arabs the Koran gives ample evidence. The very fact that the Koran stresses constantly that the Prophet Muhammad has nothing at all to do with demoniac possession, that he is *not* a man "possessed by a *Jinn*" is in itself the strongest evidence that such was the actual situation at Mecca.

Turning now to the Koranic view of the matter, we may observe that, from the standpoint of the Koran, the pagan Arabs who took Muhammad for a "poet" committed a double mistake: first, by confusing the Almighty God with an inferior being, *Jinn*, and secondly by confusing a Prophet with a poet possessed by a *Jinn*.

According to the Koranic view, the real source of Prophetic inspiration (*A*) is not a *Jinn* but Allâh. And there is between these two an absolute difference, for Allâh is the Creator of the whole world, while the *Jinn* are merely created beings;³⁹ and they, just like ordinary human beings, will be brought forth before God on the Day of Judgment to be judged,⁴⁰ and Hell will be filled both with men and *Jinn*.

In the second place, there is also an essential and absolute difference between a Prophet and a poet. A poet is by nature an *affâk*.⁴¹ what he says is sheer *ifk*, a word which does not necessarily mean a "lie", but something which has no basis of *haqq* "reality" or "truth", something that is not based on *haqq*. An *affâk* is a man who utters quite irresponsibly whatever he likes to say without stopping to reflect whether his own words have some real basis or not,

37) XXXVII, v. 158.

38) XXIII, v. 24.

39) VI, v. 100.

40) XXXVIII, v. 158.

41) XXVI, v. 222.

while what a Prophet says is Truth, absolute *ḥaqq* and nothing else.⁴² So that the $A \rightarrow B$ relation of prophetism, although it bears an outward and formal resemblance to the $A \rightarrow B$ relation of shamanism, has an essentially different inner structure from the latter.

The word *majmūn* "possessed" among the Arabs of that age was applied to still another type of man: *kāhin* to which reference was made earlier. We must now turn to this second concept.

Kāhin "soothsayer" was also a man possessed by *Jinn*, who uttered non-natural words under demoniac inspiration. *Kāhin* had much in common with *shā'ir*. Indeed, the more we go back to the ancient times the more difficult does it become to distinguish one from the other. After all, both were manifestations of shamanism, and in origin they must have been one and the same thing both in their nature and in their social function. And yet historically, there seems to have been some important points of difference.

Kāhin, in Jahiliyyah, was a man with occult powers, who exercised those powers as a profession, and received freely honorarium for his services, called *ḥulwān*. At least in the latter Jahili age as we know it from the old traditions, the *Kāhin*-ship was almost a social institution. He was interrogated on all important tribal and inter-tribal problems. He acted as an interpreter of dreams, he was asked to find lost camels; he served the tribesmen not only as a medical doctor but also as a detective in matters concerning crimes committed in society.

However, far more important from a linguist's point of view, was a stylistic feature which distinguished a *kāhin* from a *shā'ir*. The *kāhin* always gave his utterances in a particular rhythmic form known as *saġ'*. Opinion is divided as to whether this was the earliest form of poetry among the Arabs. Most probably it represents the pre-poetic form of expression: it is a form of expression which lies between regular poetry and the prose of ordinary daily conversation. Real Arabic poetry begins with *rajaz*, and *saġ'* is a stage just preceding it.

Saġ' consists in a sequence of short pregnant sentences, usually with a single rhyme. And this was the most typical style of inspiration and revelation in ancient Arabia. All speech-act that had its origin in the unseen powers, all speech-act that was not a daily mundane use of words, but had something to do with the unseen powers, such as cursing, blessing, divination, incantation, inspiration, and revelation, had to be couched in this form.

The word itself *saġ'* (corresponding to Hebrew *shag'*) etymologically and originally meant the cooing of pigeons and doves. And it was associated with

the purring sound of the *Jinn's* voice. The Prophet Muhammad himself, in a Hadith going back to 'A'ishah, describes the impression produced by the *kāhin's* utterance as the clucking of a hen:⁴³ "He (the *Jinn*) clucks (*yuqarqiru*) into the ear of his companion like the clucking (*qarqarah*) of a hen".

As an example of this style, I will give here the very well-known prophecy uttered by a famous *kāhin* *Ṣaṭīḥ*, of whom it is said that in moments of demoniac seizure he folded himself up like a garment so that his whole body appeared to be boneless except his skull.⁴⁴

رَأَيْتُ حُمَةً You see a black charcoal

خَرَجَتْ مِنْ ظُلْمَةٍ coming forth from the darkness of night

قَوَّعَتْ بِأَرْضٍ تَهَمُّ And it alights on a land sloping towards the sea

فَأَكَلَتْ مِنْهَا كُلَّ ذَاتِ جُنَّةٍ And devours everything that has a skull

This piece of *saḥ* is said to have meant the impending invasion and conquest of Yemen by the Ethiopians. When pressed by the king of Yemen as to whether this prophecy was true, the same soothsayer is related to have uttered the following words, also in *saḥ* form.

وَالشَّفَقِ By the evening twilight

وَالْفَتَقِ By the darkness

وَالْفَلَقِ By the dawn

إِذَا أُنْسَقِ When it breaks bright

إِنَّ مَا أَنبَأْتُكَ بِهِ لَحَقِ Verily what I have told you is truth

This one example will make it sufficiently clear that the *saḥ*, as regards its form, was a kind of rhymed prose very close to real poetry by the repetition of rhyme, but different from poetry in not having meter in the sense of measured syllables. We may notice also that the *saḥ* style of the *kāhin* was characteristically marked by strange oath-formulas, conjurations of nature, of which the second piece gives us some examples.

Both of these features, i.e., the repetition of rhyme which gives often the sense of haunting beauty, and the conjurations of nature are characteristic of

43) al-Bukhārī, *Bāb al-Tawḥīd*.

44) Ibn Ishāq-Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah Rasūl Allāh*, ed. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen, 1859-60, Vol. I, pp. 10-11.

45) As regards the word *ittasaqa* and its meaning, cf. the Koran, LXXXIV, v. 18.

the early *Sûrahs* of the Koran. Is, then, the Koranic style fundamentally *sajʿ*? In some passages the Koranic style seems to satisfy in every respect the basic formal norms of *sajʿ*, while in others particularly in the later *Sûrahs* the usage of rhyme words deviates so far from the standard norm of *sajʿ* that we can hardly recognize there the ordinary *sajʿ-form*. But what is far more important from the Koranic point of view is the content itself of the message conveyed, and not the form of expression which conveys the message.

However, the pagan Arabs contemporary of Muhammad did not look at the matter in this way. Instead, most of them stuck to the stylistic point of view, and took Muhammad for a *kâhin* simply because of the formal, stylistic characteristics. The Koran of course denies emphatically the Prophet's being a *kâhin*:

فَمَا أَنْتَ بِنَبِيٍّ رَبِّكَ يُكَامِنُ وَلَا مَجْنُونٌ

"By the grace of thy lord thou (Muhammad) art neither a soothsayer nor a man possessed by a *Jinn*!"⁴⁶

We are now in a position to examine from our particular point of view the third—and the most important—feature which characterizes the structure of the Koranic concept of Revelation. In the Koran, Revelation as a supernatural linguistic event is a three-person-relation concept, which makes it structurally something entirely different, not only from ordinary human speech, but also from all other types of verbal inspiration having *Jinn* as its source.

We must begin by calling to mind that both in the case of *shâʿir* and that of *kâhin*, the $A \rightarrow B$ relation is essentially a two-person-relation. A , i.e., a *Jinn* establishes a close personal relationship with B , i.e., a human being: so close is this personal relationship that the *Jinn* who possesses the man speaks through the latter. There is no intermediary between them. We might even say that in moments of demoniac seizure, the *Jinn* and the man are completely united into one person. And this is the phenomenon which we generally know under the name of shamanism.

This does not apply to the Koranic conception of Revelation which is, as I have just said, a three-person-relation. There was, in other words, in Muhammad's prophetic consciousness always somebody, some mysterious being between God and himself, who brought down Divine Words to his heart. So that the basic structure of Revelation in the sense in which the Koran understands it. is like this:

$$A \longrightarrow M \longrightarrow B$$

46) LII, v. 29; also LXIX, v. 42.

We have to go on to examine this structure further in detail. According to the Koran itself, there are only three possible types of verbal communication from God to man. The three types are clearly stated and distinguished from each other in the Sûrah *al-Shûrâ*, where we read:⁴⁷

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا
فَيُوحِي بِلَايِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ

"It is not for any man that God should speak to him except by *wahy*, or from behind the veil (*min ward'i hijâbin*) or by God's sending a messenger (*rasûlan*) to communicate (*yûhiya*) by His leave what He wills".

So the three different manners of Revelation are: (1) mysterious communication, (2) speaking from behind the veil, and (3) the sending of a messenger.

The first type is not elucidated in this verse, and, strictly speaking, we are left in the dark as to what is meant in concrete terms. But the word *wahy* would seem to suggest that the reference is to that sort of direct communication which, as noted above, was a special divine favor bestowed upon Moses to the exclusion of all other Prophets.

As to the second type, the expression used—"from behind the veil"—suggests that there does occur a verbal communication (not a simple "inspiration" *ilhâm*); only the hearer in this case does not have any vision of the speaker himself. But, although nothing is visible to his eyes, the Prophet has the clearest consciousness of there being somewhere in close vicinity a mysterious being who speaks to him in an extremely strange way. I think we can supplement our knowledge about this phenomenon by some important informations derived from the Hadîth.

In a very famous Tradition⁴⁸ going back to 'A'ishah, is related that al-Ḥārith b. Hishâm having once asked the Prophet saying, "O Apostle of God, how does the revelation come to you?", the latter replied, "Sometimes it comes to me like the ringing of a bell (*mithla salsalati al-jarasi*). And this is the most painful manner of revelation to me; then it leaves me and I have understood (*wa'aitu*) from that noise what He (God) meant to say".

Attention must be drawn to the use of the perfective aspect (*wa'aitu* "I have understood") in the last sentence, a fact which is quite significant in this context as Ibn Khaldûn pointed out long ago. What Muhammad is trying to convey thereby seems to be that while he is actually receiving Revelation he

47) XLII, vv. 50-51/51.

48) *Saḥîḥ* al-Bukhârî, I, No. 2.

does not have the consciousness of hearing any intelligible words spoken; all that he hears is something like a mysterious, indistinct noise (*dawīyy*), but the moment it ceases and he himself returns to the level of normal human consciousness he realizes that the noise has already transformed itself into distinct meaningful words.

The reading "like the ringing of a bell" (*mithla salsalati al-jarasi*) is not so certain as it is usually assumed. The last word, *al-jarasi* ("the bell") may very well be read also: *al-jarsi*; then the phrase would mean "like some low and indistinct sound". Besides, there are several other variants: "like the noise of the beating of some metal", "like the flapping of the wings of a bird" etc. Still, what is meant is always some mysterious, indefinable sound.

Then comes the third type, that of verbal communication by means of a special messenger; here Muhammad not only hears the words spoken, but actually sees the speaker. And it is to this third type that the remaining half of this Hadīth refers. There we read: "and sometimes—the Prophet goes on saying—the Angel appears to me in the form of a man and speaks to me, and in this case I understand (*a'i*) immediately what he says". We must notice that here the verb (*wa'a*), which has occurred in the perfective aspect (*wa'aitu*) in the first half of the passage, now appears in the imperfective aspect (*a'i*). This suggests clearly that in this case, and in this case only, Muhammad hears real words spoken.

Apparently Muhammad was not only an auditory type of prophet; he was also a visual type. He had many visions at critical points of his prophetic career. And in the Koran itself, in two different places reference is made to the appearance of the Mighty Being who transmitted to him Allāh's words. One is LIII, vv. 1-8, the other is LXXXI, vv. 15-25.

In the former the Divine messenger is described as *shadīd al-quwā* "One terrible in power" i.e., a being glorious and majestic, who stood straight in the highest part of the horizon, then drew near and approached till he was at the distance of two bows or nearer, and transmitted the Divine message. The second passage also gives a similar picture.

This majestic and mysterious being who made himself visible to Muhammad and transmitted to him the Divine words was at first, i.e., in the Meccan period, simply called by the symbolic name of *rūḥ al-quds*⁴⁹ "Holy Spirit".

قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيُثَبِّتَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ

49) XVI, v. 104/102.

"Say: the Holy Spirit has brought it down (*nazzala*, a verbal form corresponding to *tanzil*) with truth from thy Lord, to confirm those who believe and to be guidance and good tidings to those who have surrendered (*muslimin*)"

It is also called *al-rûh al-amin*, the "Trustworthy Spirit":⁵⁰

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِينَ
بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ

"And verily this is a revelation (*tanzil* lit. "sending down") of the Lord of the Universe, which the Trustworthy Spirit has brought down upon thy heart so that thou (Muhammad) mayest be one of the warners, in clear Arabic language".

At the same time it is strongly emphasized that it is not an inspiration coming from the *Jinn* (XXVI, 210-211—the word *al-shayâtin* "Satans" being synonymous in this kind of context with *Jinn*.)

Later, in Medina, this "Holy Spirit" comes to be identified as the Angel Gabriel⁵¹ (*Jibril* or *Jabril*). And in many of the authentic Hadîths, the Divine messenger who brought down Revelation to Muhammad is said to have been from the very first *Jibril*.

So if we are to stop at this stage of analysis, we should simply say that the Revelation is a three-person verbal relation $A \rightarrow M \rightarrow B$, in which the initial point is Allâh, the final point is the Prophet, and the middle term is the angel Gabriel. And yet, to say the truth, we should not stop at this stage, because our analysis of the concept of Revelation has not yet reached its end. We must go further into the fourth stage of analysis.

At the fourth stage, the very purpose of the Divine Revelation is the main problem. As we have just seen, God reveals His will through a heavenly messenger to Muhammad. But Muhammad himself is not the final point. Revelation does not aim at the personal salvation of Muhammad. God does not speak to Muhammad in order simply to speak to him. The Divine words should go beyond Muhammad: they must be transmitted to others. In ordinary cases of speech act ($A \rightarrow B$), A speaks to B , and the speech stops when it reaches B ; if the speech is to continue, as a dialogue, then the same process is simply reversed, B , the original hearer becoming now speaker and saying something back to A , the original speaker ($A \leftarrow B$); this is the structure of the usual

50) XXVI, vv. 192-195.

51) II, v. 91/97.

kalām. While in our particular case, *B* must in his turn become speaker not in the reversed, but in the same direction—or more correctly, transmitter of what *A* has told him. Here arises the problems of *tabligh* or *balāgh* “transmission”. And *B* is called *rasūl* “apostle” or “messenger” precisely in the capacity of the transmitter of the Divine words.

Viewed in this light, the concept of Revelation in Islam is not a three-person-relation: it must, in reality, be considered a four-person-relation concept ($A \rightarrow M \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$). According to the Koran itself, this *C* was historically the people of Mecca at first, then the Arabs as a whole, then all the so-called People of the Scripture, and then finally the whole mankind. *B* is not simply a man who receives Divine Revelation; he is a man who receives it and then transmits it to the people. In this sense, just as the angel Gabriel was a messenger⁵² (*rasūl*) sent by God to Muhammad, Muhammad himself is now a *rasūl Allāh* (God's Messenger), acting as an intermediary between God and the world.

يَا قَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِي ضَلَالَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي

“O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger (*rasūlun*) sent by the Lord of the Universe. I convey (*uballighu*) to you message of my Lord”.⁵³

فَاعْلَوْا أَنَّمَا عَلَيَّ رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

“Know that the sole duty of Our messenger is to convey (*al-balāgh*) clearly (the Divine words)”.⁵⁴

Many other examples could be given, but the idea is so clear that it is not necessary to do so.

Linguistically this opens a very interesting and important problem. Since *B* is the transmitter of what *A* has said, *B* must memorize and transmit *A*'s speech word by word. It must be conveyed to *C* exactly in the words and phrases in which it has been given. Not even the slightest change or omission is permissible. In other words, the Divine words, when they reach and are received by *B*, must form an objective entity, an objective linguistic work—a *Sprachwerk*, as the Germans would say. The Divine words as an objective *Sprachwerk* in this sense are called *qur'ān*. The word *qur'ān*, whatever its etymological meaning may be, means in this context a piece of Divine Revela-

52) LXXXI, v. 19.

53) VII, vv. 59-60/61-62. Here the words are put in the mouth of the Prophet Noah.

54) V, v. 93/92.

tion as an objective entity. Of course the whole body of the individual *qur'āns* may also be designated by the same word, and this is evidently the most usual sense in which the word *Qur'ān* (or more popularly: Koran) is understood now. However, this was not its original meaning.

In any case it is the most important duty or function of a Prophet to keep in memory the revealed text literally so that he may convey it to his people without altering even a word. If any modification occurs, then the Prophet may be accused of having committed the grave sin of *tahrif* which means "turning round" "twisting" "falsification" (the verb being *ḥarrafa*), although it is particularly the case when the modification has been done intentionally. In the Koran we see the Jews constantly accused of having "intentionally twisted" the revealed words.⁵⁵

Revelation in the technical sense of the word differs essentially in this respect from the non-technical, or pre-technical, concept of *wahy* which I explained above. There, as we saw, "revelation"—if we can use this term legitimately in such a case—is a kind of prompting to action. It may not be verbal: the man who receives inspiration in this sense may not have a clear consciousness of the exact words and phrases that have been spoken to him. The main point is that he should understand the idea itself and act in accordance with it.

Take for example the following verse:⁵⁶

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ

"And We revealed (*awḥaynā*) to Moses: 'Throw down thy rod!' And (he threw it down), lo, it (immediately changed into a snake and) swallowed up what they (i.e. the Egyptian magicians) had schemed".

As we see, God simply commanded Moses to cast his staff and Moses did cast it accordingly. The sole purpose of *wahy* here is to prompt Moses to a certain action; it is a kind of imperative. The words themselves do not count. The purpose of *wahy* once achieved, it is no longer necessary for the words to remain permanently, as a *Sprachwerk*.

In the case of Revelation in the proper, technical sense, every word and every phrase should remain permanently as an objective *Sprachwerk*. Muhammad himself was keenly conscious of the extreme importance of keeping in memory, while he was receiving revelation, the exact words and phrases as they were being given. This is clearly reflected in the Koran. In the *Sûrah al-*

55) See for instance, III, v. 48/46.

56) VII, v. 114/117.

Qiyāmah we see Muhammad admonished not to move his tongue in haste to follow the revealed sequence of words.⁵⁷ For there is danger, in doing this, of Muhammad's forming unintentionally in advance the words that are about to come, instead of waiting calmly and quietly until the revelation comes to an end. But it is clear that this haste or impatience on Muhammad's part was due to his prophetic consciousness that he should not forget even a single word. God Himself assures Muhammad in the same passage that He will take care of everything, so that all Muhammad has to do is wait until the revelation assumes a definite verbal form, and follow its wording passively.

And this is one of the reasons why from the point of view of Islam the Koran is 'inimitable' (*mu'jiz*). And this constitutes the famous problem of the 'inimitability of the Koran' (*i'jāz al-Qur'ān*). Ibn Khaldūn explains the point in the following way. The Koran occupies a unique position and stands alone among all the divine books, because here we have the text of revelation in its original form while in the case of the Torah and the Gospel, he says, the prophets received the revelation only in the form of ideas, which they, after they returned to the normal state, formulated and expressed in their own words.—We must observe in parentheses that this is not wholly true, because in the Hebrew prophetic books there are preserved some revelations in verse-form in their original wording, as they were given to the Prophets. But as a whole this *is* true, because the bulk of the Old Testament text is a work of professional writers.—Hence all the heavenly books, Ibn Khaldūn concludes, with the sole exception of the Koran, do not have "inimitability".

The word *nabīy*, as I have said, means, with regard to that particular aspect which is directly related to the concept of Revelation, a man specially chosen by God Himself to receive Revelation to the exclusion of all others, to make a *Sprachwerk* out of it by memorizing the original wording to the minutest detail, and then to transmit it to his community.

As to the origin of this Arabic word itself, the Western scholars unanimously maintain that it is a borrowing from the Hebrew *nābhīʾ*. Here we seem to detect a confusion of "word" with "concept". It is true that the particular connotation of transmitter of Divine Revelation was something completely foreign to the Bedouin Arabs, who had no idea at all of what Revelation was. And in this sense it certainly belonged to the circle of the monotheistic ideas, that was historically bound up with a long Biblical tradition; and so it is but

57) LXXV, v. 16/19. Also in XX, v. 113/114, we meet with a similar admonition.

natural that the word *nabiy* should not appear in the pre-Islamic poetry of the Bedouins. But this should not be taken to mean that the word itself is a direct borrowing from Hebrew. The word *nabiy*, in both its formation and its root meaning, belongs to the genuine Arabic stock. The root *NB'* goes beyond Arabic far back into the Semitic antiquity with the meaning of "anouncing" and "proclaiming". However this may be, the etymological question is of a secondary importance for our purpose. What is much more important from our standpoint is to know whether the Koranic concept of *nabiy* coincides completely with the Biblical concept of *nābhī*.⁵⁸ And for this purpose we must push our analysis a step further.

When we, trying to isolate the characteristic features of the Koranic concept of "Prophet", examine it carefully from the semantical point of view, we find two points standing out as worthy of special attention. These two points are both of a negative nature.

One of them is that the Arabic *nabiy* has essentially nothing to do with prophecy or prophesying in the sense of future-telling. A *nabiy*, in the Koranic conception, is not a foreteller of the future. The root from which the word *nabiy* has been derived, *NB'*, has, as we have just said, certainly the meaning of "anouncing" "giving news of something" and yet it is not towards the future that the concept faces. In the Koran, the news brought by a Prophet is always news of the *ghayb* (the unseen world of God). The Prophetic activity is always centered around transmission of the Divine Will. Of course in a certain sense, the detailed description of Hell and Paradise that will be disclosed to the eyes of mankind on the Day of Judgment may be said to be a prediction of the future. But this is far different in nature from a description of some impending and imminent event which is about to happen to a definite person or some definite nation as often happens with the Hebrew prophets seeing beforehand what will come to pass in the future; this is not at all part of the function of the Arabian *nabiy*. But this was not so easily understood by Muhammad's contemporaries, as is evidenced by the very fact that he was on many occasions asked by various men to predict future events, great and small. In the minds of those people, the concept of *nabiy* seems to have been still vaguely associated, and confused even, with the old traditional concept of *kāhin*.

The second of the negative characteristics of the semantic structure of *nabiy* is that the words he speaks or conveys has nothing to do with word-

58) For a very detailed philological analysis of the word *nābhī* in Hebrew, see Alfred Guillaume, *Prophecy and Divination*, London, 1938, Lecture III.

magic. This is an extremely important point, because it is perhaps from this angle that we can distinguish most appropriately the Islamic concept of Revelation from all manifestations of the Arabian shamanism, like poetry and oracles.

In pre-Islamic times, the *saj'* which was the style of all inspiration, and the *rajaz* which was the first poetic form developed from the *saj'*, both of them were mainly used for purposes associated in some way or other with word-magic. In those ancient days, words uttered in measured lines and with recurring rhymes were believed to be endowed with strong magical powers. The Prophet Muhammad himself recognized, according to many Hadiths, the very real power the rhyme possessed. As a matter of fact Muhammad was greatly helped, in his campaign against the pagans, by his favorite poet Ḥassân ibn Thâbit who stood in high estimation among the Muslims precisely in this capacity, despite all that the Koran says disparagingly about poets and their low moral standard. It is related that Muhammad once remarked to this poet;

لَشِعْرُكَ أَشَدُّ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ وَقْعِ السَّهَامِ فِي غَلَسِ الظَّلامِ

"Your poetry is much more dangerous to our enemy than arrows shot in the dark of night".⁵⁹

Poets, in short, were venerated and dreaded in pre-Islamic times chiefly, if not solely, because of the magical release of supernatural power he commanded against his enemy, whether personal or tribal.

There is a certain respect in which the poetic use of language presents a striking similarity, both in nature and structure, to the prophetic speech which I have described above, for in the case of a poet as in that of a prophet, the word uttered should form an objective entity—a *Sprachwerk*. The words he utters should be memorized exactly as they fall from his lips and transmitted to others in the original form. Springing from a supernatural source, his words also should go beyond him ($A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$). But launched against C, the poet's enemy, his *Sprachwerk* is no longer a linguistic phenomenon in the proper sense of the word; it is rather a magical phenomenon; the poet's speech is here a magical force that works upon C, binds him up, and destroys him.

The same was true of the *saj'*-style of soothsayers. As a true poet could handle *rajaz* poetry in a destructive way, so a real soothsayer was able to handle *saj'*-prose in such a way that he could mortally wound his enemy by the magical power of the rhyme. The magical words uttered by a competent soothsayer

⁵⁹) *Muṣaṭṭaf*, LXVI, II, 189. See for further information my *Language and Magic* 1955. pp. 130-131.

are often compared in old Arabic literature to deadly arrows shot by night which fly unseen by their victims; the verb most frequently used in such contexts is *ramā* which means "shooting". They are also compared to sharp, cutting spears that are poisonous, that inflict wounds from which the victims can scarcely hope to recover. What made these rhymed words most dangerous was that these curses and countercurses, once released, had an uncontrollable activity of their own, and nobody, even the poet or the soothsayer himself who had released them could no longer restrain the malignant and destructive forces thus released. The *qawāfi* once said exercised an enduring and unrestrainable magical power.

It is evident that the Koranic Revelation had nothing at all to do with this kind of release of magical power. *Saj'*, as we have seen, had two different aspects in the pre-Islamic age: it was, on the one hand, the language of inspiration: all supernatural inspiration, whatever its source, took linguistically this form. It was, on the other hand, a particular use of language for releasing the magical power contained in the words. This second aspect completely disappears in the Koranic usage of the rhyme-words, *al-qawāfi*. I have already shown on several occasions⁶⁰ that in the Koran many of the old pre-Islamic words and concepts are used with entirely new connotations; they have been adjusted to an entirely new conceptual framework. Old concepts are there, but they have undergone a drastic semantic transformation by having been put into a new system of values. Something similar happened to *saj'*: the old traditional form of supernatural communication is used, but it is used as a vehicle for conveying a new content. This is my answer to the question whether the Koranic style is *saj'* or not, and if it is, then how we should understand this fact in terms of the fundamental difference between Jahiliyyah and Islam. The form is still there; but it is now a pure form of supernatural inspiration. It is not used for the purpose of releasing the magical power of words, nor is it a form in which to couch "prophecy" in the sense of foretelling future events.

60) See for example, *Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran*, chapter VII.

IV REVELATION IN ARABIC

In what precedes we have been concerned with the *parole* aspect of Revelation, that is to say, with the problem of the Koranic concept of Revelation as a "speech" phenomenon. It is time now we turned to its *langue* aspect.

Langue is, as already noted, a system of verbal signs recognized by common consent as the means of communication among all individuals belonging to one community. It is in this sense a social fact, *fait social* as defined by Durkheim in his sociology. It is a symbolic system peculiar to a community, to which every member of the community must resort in talking with others if he wishes at all to make himself understood. There can be no linguistic communication unless the two persons involved in speech (*kalām*) resort to the same system of signs.

The Koran shows the clearest consciousness of this fact, and it possesses most evidently the concept of language understood in the sense of this modern technical term *langue*. The Koran bases its conception of Revelation and prophetic mission on this very idea. It starts from the recognition of the fact that each "people" (*qawm*) has its own *langue*, and it attaches a great significance to this fact in regard to the phenomenon of prophetic mission. Thus in the *Sûrah Ibrâhîm* we read:⁶¹

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ

"We never send an Apostle except with the language (i.e. *langue*) of his people, so that he might make the message intelligible".

As the peoples of the world differ in color, so they differ in language.⁶² And no adequate understanding, i.e., communication, is possible where there is no common language.⁶³

And, we are told, this is why an Arabic speaking Prophet is now sent to the Arabs with an Arabic Revelation:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

"We have sent this down as an Arabic Koran (*qur'ān* 'arabiyyan) that you may understand".⁶⁴

61) XIV, v. 4.

62) XXX, v. 21/22.

63) XVIII, 92/93.

64) XXII, v. 2.

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ
بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ

"Verily this is the revelation of the Lord of the Universe, which the Trust-worthy Spirit (i.e. Gabriel) has brought down upon thy heart, so that thou mayest be one of the warners, in clear Arabic language⁶⁵ (*bi-lisānin 'arabiyyin mubinin*).

Just as Moses was given a Book in his language, so now the Arabian Prophet is given a book in the Arabic language⁶⁶ (*lisānan 'arabiyyan*).

For if God made His revelation in some non-Arabic language, then the people would never believe, there being no understanding at all.

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا أَعْجَبِيًّا لَقَالُوا لَوْ لَا فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ أَأَعْجَبِيٌّ وَعَرَبِيٌّ

"If we had made it a Qur'ān in some non-Arabic language (*a'jamiyyan*), they would say: Why are not its verses made intelligible? Is it non-Arabic (*a'jamiyyun*) and Arabic (*'arabiyyun*)? (i.e., a non-Arabic revelation given to to an Arabian prophet?)"⁶⁷

Likewise if God should reveal this Arabic Koran to a non-Arab prophet and let him recite it in Arabic to his people, who are of course incapable of understanding it, they would never believe in him.

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضِ الْأَعْجَبِينَ لَقَرَأَهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ

"Had We sent this down upon some non-Arabian (prophet), and had he recited it to them (in Arabic), they would not have believed in it".⁶⁸

All these verses are, as we see, based on the view that each community has its own language, and that there is an inseparable tie between a community and its language. And this is tantamount to saying that the Koran has the concept of *langue* in the modern technical sense of the word. This concept is in the Koran signified by the word *lisān* "tongue".

The Koran itself gives a sure indication that a malicious rumor was being circulated among the Arabs at that time that the Koran was not a divine revelation, that, in reality, there was a man behind Muhammad, a man versed in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, who was teaching him what to say under the

65) XXVI, vv. 192-195.

66) XLVI, v. 11/12.

67) XLI, v. 44.

68) XXVI, vv. 189/199.

name of Revelation. Al-Ṭabarī mentions several Christian slaves of foreign origin whose names were on the lips of the Kāfirs who were spreading this rumor.⁶⁹

However—the Koran argues against this accusation—the native language (*lisān*) of the man to whom they attribute all this is non-Arabic (*a'jamiy*), while this is a clear Arabic language (*lisānun 'arabiyyun mubīnun*), the implication being that anyone whose language is not Arabic would be absolutely incapable of teaching Muhammad what to say in pure Arabic.

This and some other verses which I have just quoted have brought to our attention a very important word *a'jamiy*. We will do well to discuss this problem in terms of the basic contrast between 'Arab and 'Ajam. In the eyes of the ancient Arabs all the peoples of the known world were divisible into two categories: the Arabs and the non-Arabs. In the latter category all the non-Arab peoples known to them were simply lumped together without any distinction. These two concepts were not exclusively linguistic, because blood, i.e. race, also played an important role, particularly in the concept of 'Arab. But the most decisive factor was undoubtedly language. This is evidenced by the fact that even a man of pure Arab origin, if he was not able to speak Arabic properly, was very often called *a'jamiy*.

This, by the way, has led some of the authorities to the view that there is a fine distinction between *a'jamiy* (or *a'jam*) and *'ajamiy*. The former means, according to this view, a man who is incapable of expressing himself correctly and clearly, even if he be a real Arab racially, while the latter means a man who racially belongs to a non-Arab people without any regard as to whether he speaks Arabic well or not. However not all lexicographers agree to this view.

In any case, it is certain that in Jahiliyyah the root 'JM had a very wide range of application. The basic meaning seems to have been the extreme obscurity of one's speech, whether it is just a temporary casual state or a permanent state due to one's being a foreigner. The following verse by al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥumân is very interesting in this respect.

وَقَالُوا بَيْنَ هَلْ تَرَى بَيْنَ ضَارِجٍ * وَنَهَى أَكْفٍ صَارِحًا غَيْرَ أَعْبَا

"And they said: Observe well, can you see between Ḍārij and the rain-pit of Akuff anyone crying for help that is not voiceless (*a'jam*)?⁷⁰

69) XVI, 105/103.

70) *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyât*, XII, v. 36.

Here *a'jam* means a man who has lost his voice as a result of having been crying for help so long and in vain. And of course this extreme obscurity of speech, when it goes to its utmost limit, coincides with perfect silence. And the verb *ista'jama* was used just for this meaning.

We have for example in the Hadith: *Ista'jamat 'alai-hi qir'atubu*,⁷¹ which means literally "His reading or recitation (of the Holy Book) became silent against him" i.e. the man was overcome by drowsiness while he was reciting the Book and could not continue reading it. This usage of the verb is also very old, and examples are found in pre-Islamic poetry.

Finally, the idea of linguistic obscurity may take another direction: animals, cattle and the brutes are called *a'jam*. I will give only one simple example from the Hadith: *al-'ajmā'u jurḥu-hā jubārun*.⁷² The word *al-'ajmā'* is the feminine form of *a'jam*, meaning *bahimah* ("animal"). The meaning of the Hadith itself is: As to the brutes, injury (including death) caused by them is *jubār* (i.e., bloodshed which does not deserve punishment): that is to say, no vengeance should be taken for any injury caused by the brutes.

These examples will be enough to show that anybody, or anything that is incapable of speaking in a proper human way is *a'jam*. This also shows at the same time that the term *a'jam* or *ajam* was originally a pejorative term: in other words, it implied a disparaging and contemptuous attitude on the part of the Arabs towards those who could not speak Arabic, which was in their eyes the richest, the most beautiful, and the most perfect language in the whole world. To be unable to speak this perfect language was, for them, almost equivalent to being born speechless.

The same depreciating attitude towards peoples incapable of speaking Arabic underlies the usage of the onomatopoeic word *ṭimṭim*, which is often used in reference to the language of the Abyssinians (*ṭimṭim ḥabashiy* "an Ethiopian Timtim" or *ṭamāṭim sūd* "black Timtims").

It is surprising that in the midst of such a world the Koran took a fair and impartial attitude towards this problem. It did not see any natural superiority of the Arabic language over non-Arabic languages. It is true that by the rise of Islam a really unique position was assigned to Arabic as the language of Divine Revelation. But this was not, properly speaking intended to be the open declaration of the superiority of Arabic. Nor is there, for that matter, a declaration in the Koran of the racial superiority of the Arabs. For the famous

71) استجبت عليه قراءته

72) المجهاء جرحها جبار

verse quoted above (III, 106/110) which runs: "You are the best community that has been raised up for mankind" can only refer contextually to the religious community of Muslims as distinguished from other communities of the People of Scripture and not to the Arabs as a nation.

The Koranic view of this problem is based on the very clear cultural consciousness that each nation has its own language, and Arabic is the language of the Arabs, and it is, in this capacity, only one of many languages. If God chose this language, it was not for its intrinsic value as a language but simply for its usefulness, that is because the message was addressed primarily to the Arabic speaking people. We see the Koran itself declaring again and again that this Book was revealed in Arabic simply in order to facilitate the understanding. "We have sent this down in Arabic so that you might understand".⁷³

And this corresponds to the more general Islamic attitude towards the problem of racial difference. In the very famous Sûrah XLIX, 13 as well as in Muhammad's farewell speech it is explicitly stated that in Islam all men, whether Arabs or non-Arabs, are perfectly equal.

Where does this fundamental Koranic attitude come from? In order to account for this seemingly strange fact we have only to recall what was said above regarding the cultural situation in which the Arabs were living at the time when Islam was born among them.

Arabia at that time was not a closed world; on the contrary, it was an open world in lively contact with other peoples speaking different languages with widely different cultural traditions.

Roughly speaking, the Arabs of that age may be divided into two different categories or types: one was the pure, genuine Bedouin type who lived in a closed society, conservative, traditionalist, reluctant to admit anything new into their mode of living and mode of thinking, and the other was a more enlightened sort, widely open to other forms of life and thought than their own, ready to accept or even ready to go out of their tribal society in search of new and higher culutral values.

The first type of Arabs were the real children of the desert, living strictly within the narrow limits of the tribal structure of society, living in the tribe, with the tribe, and for the tribe. The very basis of their sentiments, emotions and thoughts was essentially tribal. Of course even they had to come into close contact with foreigners if only for the reason that the wine-

73) XII, v. 2.

dealers were mostly Christians, Jews and Persians, and they were people who could not imagine life without wine-drinking, and we know from their poetry that they were familiar also with the devout and meditative life of the Syrian Christian monks who lived here and there in the midst of the desert and whose solitary lamps lit in the darkness served as guides to travellers by night. And yet on the whole the Bedouins were far more concerned with themselves than with other nations. Their interest was almost exclusively centered around their tribal affairs.

Compared with this genuine Bedouin type, the second type was a far more enlightened one—the class of cosmopolitans of that age. And the Jahiliyyah produced a great number of them, among whom we find some of the greatest names in the history of Arabic literature like Labid, al-A'shà, al-Nàbighah, etc.

Of course, these were also, at bottom, tribal Bedouins as regards their mode of life, their mode of thinking, and mode of reaction in general. So it is but natural that we should find them sharing with the first type many, or even most, of the mental traits which may be considered typically Bedouin. And it need cause no surprise if we find also many border-line cases, or overlapping areas between the two classes. Thus, to take one telling example, the poet al-Nàbighah, who displayed a genuine Bedouin-ness in his thinking and expression, was also an outstanding figure in this second class.

And yet, as a whole, there is one remarkable feature which draws a clear line of demarcation between the purely tribal Bedouin type and the cosmopolitan type. Those who fell under this second category lived on an open, international level: they had a mind open to all the foreign cultures and peoples that surrounded them, that had even infiltrated deep into the Arabian peninsula. They were the intellectuals of the age, who breathed an enlightened air, and whose intellectual horizon was not at all limited to the narrow confines of Arabia; they left their souls free to be influenced culturally by the surrounding peoples with a far higher degree of civilization. They had enough curiosity to venture into unknown worlds, learn new ideas, and assimilate them. Unlike the first type, their minds were not at all confined to the tribal matters.

We see a typical example of this category in the poet al-A'shà al-Akbar, who travelled all through the peninsula from North to South, went over its border and visited Jerusalem and Homs, went to Iraq, and even crossed Iraq into the Sassanian Empire of Persia and brought back from there a number of Persian words and concepts, which he put into his poetry together with some Christian ideas which he had learned from the people of the kingdom of Ḥīrah.

He was so much interested in, and influenced by, the things he saw outside of Arabia that he almost became a Christian in his view of life and world outlook. He seems even to have travelled to Ethiopia in search of new ideas.

The state of affairs just described will make us understand why, contrary to our naive expectation, we do not find in the Koran a declaration of the natural superiority of the Arabic language. The Prophet Muhammad as a man belonged to this second type of Arabs, and the Koranic outlook over the surrounding world was also evidently of this second type, for it was based on the recognition of the existence of various nations and various communities on the earth. The spirit of the Koran, in this respect, was a definite and daring break with the old tribal spirit so characteristic of the Bedouin Arabs.

The world in which the Prophet began to develop a new religious activity was not a closed tribal society; it was an open world of lively cultural contact and cultural competition among a number of different nations. The level of cultural consciousness on which the Koran worked upon the religious feelings of the Arabs was much higher than that of the Bedouins of the desert.

We must recall in this connection the above-cited verses⁷⁴ of the Koran, in which a deep distrust is manifested in the Bedouin mentality as regards religious matters.

In other places we are told that the Bedouins are the most difficult people to handle in the matter of religion and belief. They are stubborn, obstinate, haughty and arrogant; and the vainglory prevents them from acquiring the virtue of humbleness which, however, is the very gist of the religious mind as Islam understands it.

All the evidence, in short, points to the fact that the cultural and spiritual sphere in which the Arabian Prophet lived and worked was essentially different from, and even diametrically opposed, in certain important respects, to the world in which the Bedouins lived. The Bedouins of the desert, stood far below the level of cultural consciousness at which Islam addressed itself to the Arabic speaking people. And on this high level of world conception, the Arabs were after all but one among many different peoples, and the Arabic language, too, was one of many different languages.

Thus we see why the Koran, in spite of the constant emphasis it places on its being in Arabic, does not consider itself a manifesto of the superiority of this language. Each community has its own language. So when God sent down His Revelation to the Israelites in the form of the Torah, He chose Hebrew

74) XLIX, vv. 14-15.

as the vehicle of His message, because it was the language of that community. The same is true of other Revelations sent to other nations: each people of Scripture had their own *kitāb* in the language of the community. Likewise, all Messengers who were raised before Muhammad addressed each his people (*qawm*) in their particular language. So it is now with Muhammad. Since he is primarily an Arabian prophet and Arabian apostle he is sent with a *kitāb* in Arabic. Otherwise, there would be no reason why the Arabic language should be preferred to other languages.

This central idea of the Koran was quite in keeping with the broad world outlook which I have just described in some detail. However this was not the way in which the Arabs, or to be more correct the Arab Muslims, understood the whole matter. The evident fact that nowhere in the Koran was the superiority of Arabic *per se* stated was simply ignored by them, who had always been so proud of their Arab-ness and their Arabic language.

Quite naturally, the fact that the Koran was revealed in the Arabic language was taken by the Arabs as the strongest evidence that it was superior to all other languages. If Arabic was chosen by God Himself for the vehicle of Revelation, it was not for any pragmatic usefulness but rather for the intrinsic virtue of this language qua language. Arabic was now the sacred language. And sooner or later the non-Arab Muslims also had to admit, because of their ardor and veneration for the Sacred Book, the natural superiority of this language. And thus the Arabic language qua language ended by assuming a high religious value. This process is admirably well depicted with all its theological implications by Rakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in his "Great Commentary" *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*.

This natural tendency of the Arabs, continuing to be dominant all through the Umayyad period, was pushed to its extreme and took on even an emotive nationalistic aspect in the Abbasid period when the Arab *ʿAṣabiyyah* was faced with the Persian *Shuʿūbiyyah* which claimed the incomparable superiority of the Persian culture in Islam, including the Persian language, over things Arab.

This movement which arose in the second and third centuries of Islamic history struck a fatal blow at the already declining Arab supremacy in Islam. The people who represented *Shuʿūbiyyah* not only declared openly that all Muslims were completely equal, irrespective of race, nationality and lineage—this much was in complete accordance with the Koranic teaching—but went further and said that the non-Arabs were far superior to the Arabs in every respect, who were nothing but poor barbarians of the desert with no cultural

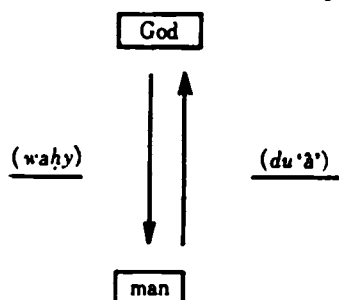
background at all, and that all that was significant in Islamic culture went back to non-Arab sources.

The leaders of the *Shu'ûbiyyah* revolt against the Arabs were naturally mostly Persians, but since the reign of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil they were joined by the Turks too. Even the last stronghold of the Arabs, i.e., the Arabic language which as I have said, had been raised to sanctity, could not remain safe from the vehement attacks of the *Shu'ûbiyyah*. Enthusiastic partisans made their utmost to bring down the Arabic language from its sacred throne and run into the opposite extreme of extolling non-Arabic languages like Greek, Persian and Indian as far more perfect than Arabic, both as a tool of logical thinking and as a means of expression for poetic sentiments and emotions.

This is indeed an extremely interesting and important phase of the history of Islamic culture. But of course the problem lies beyond the confines of the present study.

V PRAYER (*AL-DU'Â'*)

In the last section we have analyzed the concept of Revelation in the Koran. The long and short of it is that *wahy* in its narrow—properly religious—sense is a particular sort of verbal communication that takes place between God and man in the descending direction, from God to man. God addresses His words to man: directly to the Prophet, and indirectly to mankind in general. But this



linguistic relation between God and man is not unilateral. In other words, instead of remaining always passive, man on his part sometimes takes the initiative in establishing a verbal relation with God and tries to communicate with Him by means of linguistic signs. The result is a phenomenon which structurally corresponds to Revelation in that the latter is a direct verbal

communication in the ascending direction, from man to God. Like Revelation, this also can occur only in a very special form under unusual conditions. Normal-

ly, man has at his disposal no means of addressing God directly, if only for the reason that this would violate the most fundamental principle of language that there should be an ontological equality between the two parties in order that a normal exchange of words might occur. Only in an extraordinary situation, when man finds himself in an unusual, non-daily state of mind, when for some reason or other his mind has been strained almost to a breaking point, is he in a position to address words directly to God. In such a situation, man can no longer be a man in an ordinary sense; he is as al-Kirmânî says in the passage quoted above, necessarily transformed into something above himself. This type of linguistic event in a non-daily situation is *du'd'* which is usually translated "prayer". The immediate cause which induces man to use language in this way may differ from case to case. It may be deep and overbrimming piety towards God. Or it may be—and as a matter of fact it is the most usual case—imminent danger of death. We see in the Koran even the unbelieving pagans calling upon God in an emergency "making their faith sincere".

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنبِهِ أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَائِمًا فَلَمَّا كَفَتْنَا عَنْهُ ضُرَّهُ مَرَّ
كَانَ لَمْ يَدْعُنَا إِلَىٰ ضُرِّ مَسِّهِ

"When some misfortune visits a man, he calls upon Us for help (*da'd-na*), reclining on his side, or sitting, or standing. But when We have removed his misfortune he goes his way as if he had never called upon Us for help because of the misfortune that visited him".⁷⁵

دَعُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ لَئِنْ أَنْجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هَٰذَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ

"(At the last moment when they feel certain of their death by shipwreck) they call upon God for help (*da'd*), making their religion sincere: If thou deliverest us from this, we shall truly be of the thankful!".⁷⁶

In any case it is clear that this kind of linguistic behavior occurs only in an extraordinary situation which puts man out of his normal daily frame of mind. In other words, for such a thing to occur, the speaker must find himself in a 'limit situation' as the existentialists would say. For only in a limit situation can the human heart be completely purified of all mundane thoughts, and accordingly the language he speaks becomes heightened spiritually. *Du'd'* is the most intimate personal conversation of the heart with God that occurs only

75) X, v. 13/12.

76) X, v. 23/22. For the religious implication of the concept of "thankfulness", see chapter IX, section I.

when the human heart happens to be in such a state.

The following verse⁷⁷ shows better than anything else this basic relation of *du'd* with a 'limit situation':

إِنْ أَنَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَتُكُمُ السَّاعَةُ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَدْعُونَ إِنْ كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ بَلْ
إِلَّاهُ تَدْعُونَ

"If the chastisement of God comes upon you, or the Hour (i.e. the Last Hour) comes upon you, will you be calling upon other than God? (Answer) if you are truthful. Nay, upon Him alone will you be calling!"

When this original spiritual tension becomes somewhat relaxed, and the whole thing, instead of passing away as a mere momentary phenomenon, transforms itself into a fixed, deep-rooted pious habit, then *du'd* becomes synonymous with *'ibādah* "worshipping".⁷⁸

قُلْ إِنِّي نُهَيْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ

"Say: I am forbidden to worship (*'buda*) those upon whom you call (i.e. the idols) apart from God".⁷⁹

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْفُتُوحِ وَالْعِصِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ

"Drive not away those who call upon their Lord at morn and evening, desiring His countenance".⁸⁰

وَأَقِمْ وَجُوهَكُمْ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

"Set your faces in every place of worship (towards God) and call upon Him, making your religion sincere".⁸¹

It may be well to recall at this point that Revelation, as I have explained in the preceding section, is primarily designed to elicit a human response, either positive or negative. When God sends down his *āyat*, He demands man to respond to them with *taṣdiq* and "belief". In like manner, the human act of *du'd* wants to be responded to by God. Man, in other words, addresses his *du'd* to God in the expectation that his wish be granted. The Divine response to the human *du'd* is signified in the Koran by the word *istijābah* meaning literally "answering" "being ready in response." Semantically we may describe

77) VI, vv. 40-41.

78) For a discussion of the meaning of this word, see the next chapter.

79) VI, v. 56.

80) VI, v. 52.

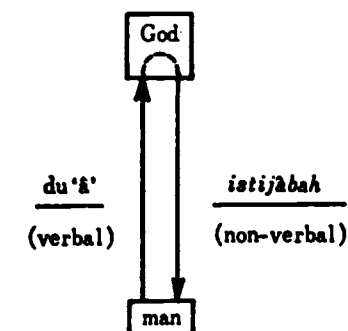
81) VII, v. 30/29.

this by saying that the concept of *du'ā'* stands in correlation with that of *istijābah*. Unlike *du'ā'*, which is essentially verbal, *istijābah* is non-verbal.

In the Koran, God Himself declares positively that He is always ready to "answer" if only men call upon Him sincerely.

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ

"Your Lord has said: Call upon Me, and I will answer you".⁸²



Moreover, the Koran attaches the highest importance to the concept of *istijābah*, as is evident

from the fact that it makes the incapacity for *istijābah* one of the most salient marks of a false god. The gods whom the Kāfirs worship apart from Allāh cannot respond to their *du'ā'*, however much the worshippers call upon them. They do not hear the Kāfirs' prayer, and even if they did, they would not be able to answer anything. The *du'ā'* of the unbelievers goes only astray.

إِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوا دُعَاءَكُمْ وَلَوْ سَمِعُوا مَا اسْتَجَابُوا لَكُمْ

"If you call upon them (i.e. the idols), they will not hear your *du'ā'*, and even if they heard, they would not respond (*istajābū*) to you".⁸³

لَهُ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَهُمْ بِشَيْءٍ إِلَّا كَبَاسِطٍ كَفِّهِ إِلَى الْمَاءِ لِيُلْقِعَ فَاهُ وَمَا هُوَ بِيَالِيهِ وَمَا دُعَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ

"To Him is the real *du'ā'*. And those upon whom they call apart from Him, do not respond (*yastajībū*) to them at all, but it is as a man stretches forth his hands towards water that it may come to his mouth, and it will never come. The *du'ā'* of the Kāfirs goes only astray".⁸⁴

Theoretically, this manner of using words may be considered a variety of the 'magical' use of language. By classifying *du'ā'* "prayer" under 'magical' use of words, I am not implying anything depreciatory or pejorative such as may be suggested by the association of the word "magic" *siḥr* in the Koran. Here the 'magical' must be taken as a pure technical term referring to a particular case in which words in special situations are used in such a way that they may

82) XL, v. 60.

83) XXXV, v. 15/14.

84) XIII, v. 15/14; see also XL, v. 53/50.

produce some immediate effect on the addressee. Any words one utters in a highly strained psychological state with the intention of affecting one's hearer immediately are 'magical' in this sense. Even in quite ordinary, daily situations, when you use a verb in the imperative form, you are using language in a 'magical' way, although in an extremely weakened and insipid form, so insipid and stereotyped that we do not regard it usually as 'magical'. Still the underlying principle is quite the same.

Magical use of language in a more technical sense is a large class comprising besides personal 'prayer' addressed to God, oath-making, swearing, imprecation, blessing, etc. In Jahiliyyah, the magical function of language played a tremendous role in society. But this aspect of the linguistic life of the Arabs has been explored long ago by Goldzieher⁸⁵ so fully and in such a scholarly way that there is almost nothing left for us to say.

85) In his study on the *Hijā'* poetry in ancient Arabia, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-105.

CHAPTER VIII

JAHILIYYAH AND ISLAM

I ISLAM AND THE CONCEPT OF HUMBLE SUBMISSION

In this chapter we are going to deal with the third aspect of the fundamental relation between God and man: the Lord-servant relation, God as the "Lord" (*rabb*) and man as His "servant" (*abd*).

As already noted, the conception of Allāh as "Lord" was not unknown to the Jahili Arabs. Only in pre-Islamic times Allāh was not the sole, absolute Lord. There were besides Him many *rabbs* and *rabbabs*. Islam acknowledged Him for the first time as the absolute Sovereign, the Only Absolute Lord of the whole world.

This implied that all other things, not only ordinary human beings, but the Prophets and even the Angels should never be considered "Lords" (*arbāb*) in any sense. In III, 74/80; III, 171/172, for example, we are told that even "the angels who are near stationed to God" (*al-malā'ikah al-muqarrabūn*) will not be allowed to disdain to be His faithful and humble servants.

The establishment of the conception of Allāh as the Absolute Lord of all necessarily introduced also a radical change into the conception of the relation between God and man. A new semantic field was formed around this new idea, containing a number of most important key-terms in the Koran.

Since God is now the Absolute Sovereign, the only possible attitude for man to take towards Him is that of complete submission, humbleness and humility without reserve. In short, a "servant" (*abd*) should act and behave as a "servant" (*abd*)—hence the important semantic development shown by the word *'ibādah*, which from the original literal meaning of "serving Him as a servant" "serving Him as behooves a servant" eventually has come to mean "worship" and "cult". This association of concepts is shown very clearly in the following verse:

رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَاعْبُدْهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِحُكْمِهِ

"Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. So serve Him, and be steadfast in His service".¹

The primary function of a servant consists naturally in serving his master faithfully, paying constant and careful attention to the latter's wishes whatever he wishes, and obeying without murmuring his commands. This is why so much importance is attached in the Koran to the group of terms meaning absolute obedience, submission and humility, like *ṭā'ah* "obdience",² *qunūt* "obedience, humbleness",³ *khushū'* "submissiveness",⁴ *taḍarru'* "self-abasement"⁵ all these stand in a sharp contrast to the attitude of stubborn refusal to obey, symbolized in the Koran by the image of a "hardened heart".

But by far the most important of all the concepts belonging in this class is the concept of *islām* itself, not, of course, in the sense of the historical, objective religious culture known as Islam—Islam as a result of the process of 'reification', to use the terminology of Dr. Wilfred Cantwell Smith—but *islām* in the original sense of the determined self-submission, self-surrendering to the Divine Will, i.e., a decisive step taken by each individual person, as his own inner personal and existential problem, towards resigning his soul to God.⁶

Islām, or the verb *aslama*, in the sense in which it is used in the phrase *aslama wajha-hu li-Allāhi* lit. "He has submitted his face to God", means originally and primarily that one voluntarily surrenders oneself to the Divine Will putting one's trust wholly in God. It is, in short, the kind of unconditional self-surrender which expresses itself verbally in a verse like this:

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ

"And, Lord, make us submissive to thee!"⁷

Now, what makes this concept particularly important among all the con-

1) XIX, v. 68/65.

2) V, v. 93/92.

3) II, v. 110/118.

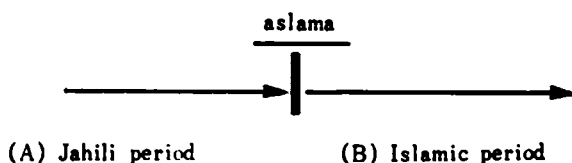
4) LVII, v. 15/16.

5) VI, v. 42/43.

6) Like most of the Koranic key-terms, *islām*, or at least its verbal form *aslama*, has its pre-Islamic history. In Jahiliyyah the word meant "giving over" in general. To be more precise, *aslama* means that a man gives over something which is particularly dear to him, precious to him, something which is difficult or painful for him to abandon, to somebody who demands it. This precious something may be his own self, which is of course, in most cases, the most precious possession a man has in his hand; (in which case it means naturally total submission, self-surrendering); it may also be somebody else, one of his dear friends or his tribesmen (in which case it would mean betrayal). In any case the basic meaning is that of giving over one's precious possession to somebody else.

7) II, v. 122/128.

cepts relating to humbleness and submission, is primarily of course the fact that God Himself has chosen this as the name of the new Arabian religion. But it is also due to the fact that *islām*, as an inner personal religious experience of each individual person, means the occurrence of an important event that marks the initial point from which real obedience and humbleness begin. It marks a decisive turning point in the life of a man, a turning point in the religious sense which cuts his whole length of life into two halves (A, B) that will hence-



forward stand diametrically opposed to each other. Grammatically speaking, the verb *aslama* belongs to a particular group of verbs called inchoa-

tive'. In other words, instead of denoting a permanent nature, it signifies something new that comes into being for the first time; it marks the beginning of a new situation, the birth of a new nature. Only in the participial form *muslim* does it signify a more or less permanent attribute. But even then the implication is that it is an attribute which has ensued from the decisive step taken.

All the other Koranic terms meaning obedience and submission are extremely vague and ambiguous in this respect. They might give the wrong impression of obedience and humility being a natural quality of man. They do not contain in their semantic structure the moment of existential decision, of jumping into an unknown sphere of life. Only the word *islām* implies this. A *muslim* in the original sense is a man who has dared to make such a jump. Of course I am speaking of the Muslims in the earliest period of Islam as depicted in the Koran, when all the Muslims without exception, including the Prophet himself, had been once pagans.

It is only after a man has made this decisive jump that such concepts as "obedience", "submission" and "humility" begin to appear invested with a truly religious significance. The words like '*khushû*', '*taqarru*' etc. as key-terms in the Koran do not mean simple, ordinary humbleness. What is meant thereby is a particular kind of humbleness that ensues from the decisive act of *islām* which we have just analyzed.

As I have said, the spiritual act of *aslama* ushers in an entirely new period in the life of a man, and the two portions of life separated in this way by the point of *aslama* are of an entirely different nature from each other and are radically opposed to each other. If we call the portion B 'Islamic' period A may be called 'Jahili' period of a man. It must be kept in mind that we are

now talking of the life of of an individual man. 'Islamic' and 'Jahili' do not yet designate at this stage two consecutive historical periods, as they do in later Islam. 'Jahiliyyah' is still a personal quality, not the name of a historic age. In this original sense, 'Jahili' cannot properly be translated as 'pre-Islamic', because it means much more, as we shall see immediately. It does not mean simply a period preceding the rise of Islam; it is something positive, and positively opposed to 'Islamic'.

At any rate, the life of one individual person is divided into two entirely different parts. From now on he is a Muslim, while up till now he has been a Jāhil. What does this mean? This is the main problem which will occupy our attention in the following pages.

A man's being a Muslim implies many different things, but from the specific point of view which is ours now, it means primarily that he is a man who has abandoned all his selfishness, all pride in human power, and stands humbled, meek and submissive as a "servant" (*'abd*) before God who is his Lord (*rabb*) and Master. This '*abd*-ness is the distinguishing feature of the portion *B* in the above diagram.

The portion *A* implies all the personal qualities that are contrary to this absolute submissiveness and humility, all those qualities that prevent man from being submissive and humble to God. Pride in human power, limitless self-confidence, sense of absolute independence, the unshakable determination not to bow before any authority, whether human or divine—in short, all that is contrary to '*abd*-ness. Historically, too, this was one of the most characteristic traits of the pre-Islamic Arab mind.

In fact, the pre-Islamic Arabs were notorious for the personal qualities which have just been mentioned. But far from being moral defects, these represented in their eyes the highest ideal of human virtue, the noblest virtue of a man really worthy of the name of "man" *al-fatā*. For these qualities were all based on, and various manifestation of, the sense of "honor" *'ird* which was deep-rooted in their mentality, and which was, indeed, the highest regulating principle of their conduct.

This prominent Jahili quality was variously known as *anafah*, literally "high-nosed-ness", *ibā'* "refusal (i.e. to allow one's honor sullied)", *ḥamiyyah* "zeal for defending what one has to defend"—a word which occurs in the Koran (XLVIII, 26) precisely in this sense in the particular combination of *ḥamiyyah al-jāhiliyyah* ("the *ḥamiyyah* which is characteristic of the *jāhiliyyah*") and

hafizah "guarding jealously one's honor". All these words were in use then to mean the noble quality of a noble man who would proudly refuse to accept anything whatsoever that might degrade his personal dignity, a fierce passionate nature to hurl back with scorn anything which might make him feel humbled and humiliated even in the slightest way.

This fiery spirit of resistance which made man refuse resolutely to submit and surrender to the will of any other man, and to sully thereby his honor was indeed the real fountain-head of almost all Jahili human values. This spirit found its expression in various forms everywhere in pre-Islamic poetry. Here is an example which expresses it in the simplest and most straightforward way:

نَأْيَ عَلَى النَّاسِ الْمَقَادَةَ كَلِمَةً * حَتَّى تَقُودَهُمْ يَنْتِيرَ زِمَامٍ

"We refuse resolutely to submit to another's direction, whoever he may be! On the contrary, we make all men obey our directions, and that without bit and bridle".⁸

It is worthy of note that the word with which the verse begins, *na'bah*, comes from the verb *abā* which corresponds to the above-mentioned verbal noun *ibā'* "refusing proudly". A man characterized by this haughty spirit of resistance to anything that might tarnish his "honor" was called *abiy*. An *abiy* was a man who could never acquiesce in being abased by anybody else, and even never allowed any of those who happened to be under his protection to be abased, as Ta'abbata Sharran says in the verse quoted earlier in connection with the problem of human destiny.

At this haughty spirit of Jahiliyyah Islam struck a mortal blow. Or perhaps we should rather say that Islam touched on the sore point of the mentality of the Jahili Arabs. For it demanded of them, before anything else, to abandon before the One and Only king of the whole world all pride in human power, the feeling of self-sufficiency, which the Koran called *istighnā'* and *ṭughyān*—from the verb *taghā* meaning a torrent of water rising high to the degree of overflowing (XCVI, 6-7), and to feel really humble and submissive to a Will which presides over the whole universe as the supreme Lord.

كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَبِغْتَنَىٰ أَنْ رَءَاهُ اسْتَفْتَنَىٰ

"No, indeed, man tends to be insolent (*yaṭghā*), because he thinks himself self-sufficient (*istaghnā'*)".⁹

8) 'Abid b. al-Abras, *Diwān*, XL, v. 20.

9) XCVI, vv. 6-7, cf. also what Prof. M. Watt says on these two words in his *Muhammad at Mecca*, pp. 66-67.

From the Islamic point of view, everyone is a servant ('*abd*') of this Lord, and it is his natural duty to manifest his '*abd*'-ness in all his actions and sayings, to serve his great Lord with unbounded humbleness and docility. From the point of view of a Jahili man, however, no one is entitled to demand of him such a thing; he is the Lord of himself. Humble and docile submission to whomsoever it may be, is in his eyes simple servitude—i.e. '*abd*'-ness in the sense of being an abject slave as opposed to a free-born Arab (*ḥurr*).

Again from the Islamic point of view this refusal of self-surrender on the part of Jahili Arabs was nothing but a manifestation of human presumptuousness, insolence and arrogance caused by man's ignorance of himself and of God. This is why in the Koran the word *istikbār* "to be haughty"—or more literally, "to consider oneself great"—and its synonyms play such an important role in the critical description of the attitude of the Kāfirs. In fact, the overbearing haughtiness and the mocking attitude that ensues from it are described minutely and vividly everywhere in the Koran as the most characteristic feature of the pagan Arabs.

This is, in short, the spirit of the Jahiliyyah to which the Koran refers in the Sûrah *al-Fath*.¹⁰

إِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْحَيَّةَ حَيَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ

"When the Kāfirs set up in their hearts the *ḥamiyyah*, that *ḥamiyyah* so characteristic of the *Jāhil*-ness".

Thus we see here before our eyes another basic conceptual conflict between two irreconcilable principles: *jāhiliyyah* on the one hand, and *islām* on the other, that is, haughtiness, arrogance and insolence on the one hand, and humbleness and submission on the other, towards one and the same object—Allāh. And this is undoubtedly the most 'dramatic' moment of the whole Koranic Divina Commedia.

It is important to remark in this connection that this radical opposition of *jāhiliyyah* and *islām*, or of *jāhil* on the one hand and *muslim* or *mu'min* on the other, was quite a new situation brought about by the rise of Islam in Arabia, as is easy to see from the very fact that the concept of *muslim* or *mu'min* itself in the religious sense had not been existent in pre-Islamic times.

In pre-Islamic times, *jāhil* (or *jahl*) was sharply opposed to a different concept, viz., *ḥalīm* (or *ḥilm*). But again the problem is very delicate because this concept of *ḥilm*, although quite a different concept from *islām*, is not so

different as to have nothing in common with it. On the contrary, there is even a certain respect in which we might regard it as the pre-religious, pre-Islamic form of the concept of *islām* itself. This is shown by the fact that when the new religion replaced the old concept of *ḥalīm* by the new concept of *muslim* or *mu'min*, the replacement took place gradually and as a natural process, so to speak, without causing, in this respect, any abrupt break with the old Arabian ethics. How, then, was *ḥilm* replaced smoothly by the new concept of *islām*? How does this latter concept link up historically with that of *ḥilm*, as a new interpretation of an old concept? This will be our next problem.

It is a commonplace today among the Orientalists that *jahl* was not in pre-Islamic times contrary of 'ilm—'ignorance' as opposed to 'knowledge'—as it had been generally believed before Goldzieher published his now famous paper on this problem.¹¹

The major points of his thesis have been summarized by many Western writers on the origin of Islam in Arabia,¹² and I myself have referred to this article in my book on the *Structure of the Ethical Terms* and have examined there carefully all the relevant passages in the Koran in which the root *JHL* appears under various forms. It would be wearisome to go over again what has so often been discussed. Here I shall take up this problem from a somewhat different angle, trying at the same time, if possible, to push further ahead the analysis of the conceptual pair: *jahl* and *ḥilm*.

In Islam—or to be more exact, in the Koran—*jāhiliyyah* is a religious term in the negative sense, because it is the very basis on which the *kufr* of the Kāfirs is based. In fact, it was this haughty spirit of independence, this keenest sense of honor which refused to bow before any authority, be it human or divine, that incited the Kāfirs to set up the most determined opposition against the new religion. The *jāhil*-ness was in short, the very root and source of *kufr*.

In pre-Islamic times the word had no religious connotation at all. *Jahl* was simply a human, personal feature; only it was a very characteristic one. It was really something quite typical of the pre-Islamic Arabs. So much so that when we read pre-Islamic poetry, it is, together with its counterpart *ḥilm*, one of those concepts that we meet with almost at every step. Unless we know the exact meaning of this pair of words, *jahl* and *ḥilm*, we cannot hope to understand the psychological make-up of the ancient Arabs, and, consequent-

11) "Was ist unter 'al-Gahiliyya' zu verstehen?" (*Muhammedanische Studien* I, pp. 219-228).

12) See among others, for example, the excellent summary by Prof. A. J. Arberry in his *The Seven Odes*, pp. 251-253.

ly, in many cases we would not be able to understand why they acted and reacted as they did, for we would not see the driving motive underlying their peculiar behavior pattern.

The concept of *jahl* being so characteristic of the psychology of the pre-Islamic Arabs it is but natural that the word should occur very frequently in Jahili poetry. And it is comparatively easy to isolate the basic semantic elements of this word, if we examine carefully the numerous instances of its usage in pre-Islamic literature, applying to them the method of contextual analysis.

The major semantic constituents of this concept which my own analysis has isolated may conveniently be stated in a summary form as follows.

(1) The first and the most conspicuous feature of the human nature signified by the word *jahl*—or rather we should perhaps say the root *JHL*, for *jahl* is merely one of the many possible forms under which the root *JHL* appears—concerns a particular behavior pattern.

Jahl is the typical behavior pattern of a hot-blooded impetuous man, who tends to lose his self-control on the slightest provocation, and consequently to act recklessly, driven by an uncontrollable blind passion, without reflecting on the disastrous consequence this behavior might lead to. It is the behavior pattern peculiar to a man of an extremely touchy and passionate nature, who has no control of his own feelings and emotions, and who, therefore, easily surrenders himself to the dictates of violent passions, losing the sense of what is right and what is wrong.

It is to this aspect of *jahl* that the concept of *hilm* is primarily opposed. *Hilm* is the nature of a man who is able to stop the outburst of this very *jahl*. *Halim* is a man who knows how to smother his feelings, to overcome his own blind passions and to remain tranquil and undisturbed whatever happens to him, however much he may be provoked.

If *jahl* is a burning flame of anger—and the image is actually used by Jahili poets: *iḥtidām*¹³ (the verb *iḥtadama*) meaning “to burn with a furious flame and scorching heat”—*hilm* is calmness, balanced mind, self-control, and steadiness of judgment.

This contrast between *jahl* and *hilm* found its expression in a very interesting metaphor in a verse by ‘Amr b. Aḥḥar al-Bāhili. The poet was a Jahili, who later embraced Islam.

وَدَعَمُ نَصَادِيهَا الْوَلَايَةُ جِلَّةٌ * إِذَا جَهَلْتَ أَجَوَانَهَا لَمْ تَعْلَمْ

13) For example, *al-Ḥamāsah*, DCCLXVIII, v. 3.

"Many the large (*jillab*) black cooking pots (*dubm* lit.: black ones) which our maid-servants take good care of (*tuṣādi-hā* lit.: flatter and cajole them); once their belly (i.e. the content of the pots) becomes *jābil* (i.e., boils up), it will never become *ḥālim* (i.e. calm down)".¹⁴

The first thing that attracts our attention in this verse is that it describes the cooking pots of the poet's tribe that continue boiling and seething endlessly as if they would never calm down, a very impressive symbol of wealth and limitless hospitality. The poet produces an unusual effect by describing the pots as if they were human beings, and this by ascribing to them metaphorically two important human qualities: *jahl* and *ḥilm*. For our present purpose, this verse is interesting because this metaphor of a large black seething pot over a burning fire makes us understand better than any lengthy prosaic description the nature of the concept of *jahl* and of its opposite *ḥilm*.

At the same time this metaphor makes us see how appropriate the word *jābil* is in the Koran in the mouth of Joseph in Egypt in describing the dangerous temptation to which he almost yielded.

رَبِّ السَّجْنِ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ
وَأَكُنُّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

"O my Lord!" he cries, "I would sooner be cast into prison than do that which these women urge me to do. Yet if Thou turnest not from me their temptation, I shall surrender myself to the surge of lust (*aṣbu*) for them and so become a *jābil*".¹⁵

The verb *ṣabā* (*aṣbu*) is worthy of note in this context. In pre-Islamic literature, it is, so to speak, a technical term in common use in love-poetry for a rushing surge of youthful passion. It means that you are overwhelmed by an unbridled passion that surges up in your heart, disturbs your balance of mind, makes you lose the sense of right and wrong, and drives you towards folly. The following verse by al-Mukhabbal is very illuminating in this respect because it shows the close conceptual relation that exists between *ṣabā*—which is, as we know from the Koranic verse just cited, nothing other than a different name of *jahl*—and *ḥilm*.¹⁶

ذَكَرَ الرَّبَّابَ وَذَكَرَهَا سَمُّ * فَصَبَا وَلَيْسَ لِيَنَّ صَبَا حِلْمٌ

"Suddenly the image of Rabâb came back to his memory, and indeed the

14) *al-Ḥamāsah*, DCCLXII, v. 1.

15) XII, v. 33.

16) *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyât*, XXI, v. 1.

remembrance of her is an illness. It made him succumb to a surging passion of love, and once a man has succumbed to the blind passion of love, there can be no place in him for *hilm*".

The same negative combination of *hilm* with *ṣabā* is seen in the next verse from the same *Dirwān*:¹⁷

لَيَالِي إِذْ تُضَيِّى الْحَلِيمَ يَبْلُغَا

"Those nights when she tried to provoke passion in the heart of a grave and serious man with her coquetry".

With this, I think a general idea has been given of what kind of a man a *jāhil* is, and what kind of a man a *ḥalīm*. *Jahl*, we have seen, is a behavior pattern peculiar to a hot-blooded man who tends to lose his temper at the slightest provocation and make himself uncontrollable. At this stage, it has nothing at all to do with the concept of "ignorance". A *ḥalīm* is a man who knows how to overcome his surging emotions and passions, who is able to keep himself tranquil and unperturbed under provocation.

I must add one more important remark regarding the meaning structure of *ḥalīm* and *hilm*. The explanation I have just given may convey the wrong impression that *hilm* were a passive quality, something that would remind one of the natural meekness of a lamb. On the contrary, it is a positive and active power of the soul that is strong enough to curb her own impetuosity that may drive the man headlong to folly, and calm it down to patience and forbearance. It is a sign of the power and superiority of the mind.

There can be no *hilm* where there is no power. It is essentially a quality of a man who governs and dominates others, and not of those who are governed and dominated. A naturally weak and powerless person is never called *ḥalīm*, however much he calms down his anger when insulted; he is "weak" simply. *Ḥalīm* is a man who possesses power, power to go to all kinds of violence when provoked and yet possesses, at the same time, the power to restrain himself from doing violence.

إِنَّ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ذُلًّا أَنْتَ عَارِفُهُ * وَالْعِلْمُ عَنْ قُدْرَةٍ فَقُلْ مِنَ الْكِرَمِ

Here the poet, Sālim b. Wābiṣah, after describing in detail how he always tries and succeeds to check his fits of anger and to keep himself from rushing to acts of violence, whatever those who envy him and hate him do and say against him, reflects and says proudly:

"Verily, to take the attitude of humility consciously is a kind of *hilm*,

17) XIV, v. 8. The poet is al-Muzarrid.

and in fact *hilm* based on power (and not coming from '*ajz* 'natural weakness') is a virtue characteristic of the nobleness of the soul".¹⁸

In this verse we see clearly stated that the true *hilm* is a "conscious" effort to keep oneself calm despite the fact that one is fully in possession of *qudrab* "power" (to strike back). *Halim* is a man who forgives his enemy and shows gentleness "from above", from a superior position. This will make us understand the true meaning of the word *halim* as applied to Allāh in the Koran.¹⁹ God forgives sins committed by men and is gentle, but it is not a simple gentleness; it is a gentleness based on power, forbearance based on calm wisdom, which is possible only because it is coupled with an infinite power. It suggests, therefore, that there is always in the background the possibility of a dreadful and drastic punishment.

It is clear, then, that *hilm* is a particular behavior pattern backed by a clear consciousness of one's own superiority and power. It is not a sign of "natural weakness", '*ajz*'; it is a sign of natural "power" (*qudrab*). That is why the concept of *hilm* is so closely associated with *waqār* meaning the "dignity of manner and deportment".

Since *hilm* is such a particular kind of tranquility which conceals within it a tremendous power, highly compressed inner energy, it is very difficult for it not to make itself manifest in a physical way, in deportment and outward attitude. This bodily manifestation of *hilm* is *waqār*, "grave and dignified bearing"—*waqār al-hilm* ("*waqār* of *hilm*") as it is often called. Khalaf b. Khalifah, a famous poet of the Umayyad period gives us an interesting example.

عَلَيْهِمْ وَقَارُ الْعِلْمِ حَتَّى كَانُوا * وَلِيْدُهُمْ مِنْ أَجْلِ مَتِيَّتِهِ كَهْلٌ

"All of them show a remarkable of *hilm* so much so that even a small boy among them looks as if he were a man of mature age because of his natural dignity".

This is of course an exaggeration, but it brings out very well an important aspect of the concept of *hilm*.

Waqār is a value word. That is to say, the word represents the outward attitude of a *halim* as something imposing and admirable. The same "dignified bearing" may also be looked at with antipathy, from the standpoint of an enemy. Then it would be nothing but the bodily manifestation of sheer "arro-

18) *al-Hamāsab*, CDXIII, v. 5.

19) For instance, III, v. 149/155 إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ "Verily God is All-forgiving, *Halim*". Examples abound in the Koran.

gance".

.....إِذِ الْخَصْمُ أَزْبَىٰ مَائِلَ الرَّأْسِ أَنْكَبُ

"When the opponent shows an arrogant attitude, swaggering about with his chest puffed out elatedly (*abzd*), inclining his head on one side, perking up his shoulder".²⁰

This a typical description of a "haughty" man. The inclining of his head on one side²¹ was so typical of this kind of man that the phrase *istaqāma al-akhda'u*,²² lit. "the neck has straightened up" meant that the man lost his self-confidence and became humiliated.

With all this, it was not always easy, particularly for those who were unable to see things hidden under the surface, to distinguish between a real *ḥalīm*, that is, a man who showed gentleness and meakness because he was tremendously powerful, and a man who was, so to speak, forced to be gentle and smiling simply because he was weak. And a real *ḥalīm* was often mistaken for a weak, powerless man, to whom one could do anything one liked to do without any danger of being hit back.

أَظُنُّ الْحِلْمَ دَلَّ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِي * وَتَدَّ يُسْتَجَبَلُ الرَّجُلُ الْحَلِيمُ

"I think that it is my apparent meekness (*ḥilm*) that has induced my tribesmen to do all kinds of wrong and injustice to me, but even a *ḥalīm* man may sometimes be forced to lose his composure and give a free rein to his ebullient anger (*yustajhalu* lit.: to be forced to become a *jāhil*)."²³

This inability to distinguish between real *ḥilm* and real weakness made itself manifest not only in the field of mundane, purely human relations, but in a certain sense at the religious level also, namely, in the attitude of the pagan Meccans towards Islam. For, as the Koran shows, the disbelieving Meccans full of self-confidence and pride were induced to assume a more and more arrogant attitude towards Islam when they saw that the severe Divine punishment did not actually overtake them as promised so repeatedly by the Revelation. Seen from the point of view of the Muslims, the Meccans mistook Divine *ḥilm* for weakness and lack of power.

Before closing this part of our discussion, we must mention briefly one more important fact. The above study of the concept of *jahl* will contribute

20) by an anonymous poet of Banū Faq'as, *al-Ḥamāsah*, L, v. 2.

21) *الْوَلَّى رَأْسَهُ* as Laylā al-Akhyaliyyah says, *al-Ḥamāsah*, DCXCIX, v. 1.

22) *akhda'* properly means "the occipital artery".

23) Qays b. Zuhayr, a pre-Islamic poet, *al-Ḥamāsah*, CXLVII, v. 4.

toward elucidating the concept of *ẓulm*, which is another outstanding key-term in the Koran.²⁴

If the outer manifestation of *ḥilm* is, as we have just seen, *waqār*, that of *jahl* is *ẓulm*. In most cases *ẓulm* is nothing but a particular form assumed by *jahl* when it bursts out in a physically observable form in behavior; in short, *jahl* is the inside and *ẓulm* is the outside of the matter. This will, I think, make us understand immediately that *ẓulm* is not a simple "wrong-doing" as the word is commonly translated. At the same time, this would seem to make it clear that the basic meaning of the word *ẓulm*, as it is used in the Koran in reference to the attitude of the stubborn disbelievers, should be understood in correlation with *jahl*.

Behind all their acts of *ẓulm* against the Prophet and his followers, we must see the working of the spirit of *jahl*, as the very source of all these actions. By offering a stubborn and violent resistance to the Prophet and the Divine teaching, they are apparently and seemingly directing their *ẓulm* towards God Himself. But, in the Koranic conception, no one in the whole world can ever direct an act of *ẓulm* towards God. So they are, in reality, doing *ẓulm* not to God, but to themselves. This must be the meaning of the Koranic expression *ẓulm al-nafs* "doing wrong to oneself".

In order to understand this point still better we have to remember that the concept of *jahl* is a very wide one covering almost the whole range of human life. In other words, whenever a man loses his temper and his self-control, he is being a *jāhil*. But at the higher level of moral life, the concept acquires a very special coloring by being associated with the concept of "personal honor" *ʿird*. Then it is a particular type of moral indignation caused by the feeling that one's *ʿird* is being vitally involved, that one's personal honor has been compromised or violated. This behavior pattern was, as we saw earlier, quite typical of the pre-Islamic Arabs.

In this particular context, *jahl* means an attitude of stern protest against having one's personal honor trampled under foot. It is a determined refusal to be humiliated. This, I think, is exactly what is meant by the above-mentioned phrase in the Koran *ḥamiyat al-jāhiliyyah*. It is clear from the Koran that many pagan Arabs felt as an unbearable humiliation to bow before the absolute authority of God. It did not make much difference to them whether the supreme authority before whom they were commanded to bow was human or divine.

24) The concept itself has been subjected to a detailed semantical analysis in my *Structure*, pp. 152-159.

The idea itself of surrendering to any superior authority and being commanded to do so was to them unbearably humiliating. They were *jāhil* in this particular sense.

And it is evidently this particular moral aspect of *jahl* that plays a major role in the religious world-view of the Koran.

(2) We now turn to the second semantic element of *jahl*, and in connection with it, that of *hilm*, too. This second aspect is directly dependent on the first aspect and derives from it; it is the most natural consequence of *jahl* being such a thing as I have just tried to explain. The second aspect concerns the effect of *jahl* on the intellectual capacity of man. Quite naturally this effect can appear only in a negative way, i.e., destructively. The nature of *jahl* is such that whenever it becomes active it smothers and weakens the reasoning power of the human brain. In order to keep your steadiness of judgment, in whatever situation you may be put, you must be a *ḥalīm*.

Of course one may object to this and say like Ma'bad b. 'Alqamah, a poet contemporary of the Prophet:

..... * وَتَجَلُّ أَيْدِيَنَا وَتَعْلَمُ رَأْيُنَا

"Our hands act in a *jāhil* way, yes, but our head remains calm and *ḥalīm*"²⁵

This is possible in theory; it is easy to say this, but in practice, it is a feat rarely to be accomplished. How can one see things objectively with an undisturbed tranquility of mind when one is blind with passion? As a general rule, *jahl* causes the weakening, if not complete loss, of the function of reason ('*aql*'); only when coupled with *hilm*, is '*aql*' capable of functioning normally.

It will be easy to see, then, that *hilm* has in itself a latent possibility of being developed and elaborated philosophically into something close to the Hellenistic virtue of 'non-perturbation' based on the cultivation of autarcy. The Arabs did not go in this direction.

But *hilm* is capable also of being developed in another direction, i.e., in the direction of administrative skill and political wisdom, a remarkable show of tact and statesmanship, based on a perfect control of one's own feelings, in dealing with other people and particularly, in governing and ruling other people. This is what the Arabs did.

In Jahiliyyah *hilm* was unanimously recognized, and highly esteemed, as one of the most essential, indispensable qualities of a *sayyid* or a man standing at the head of the tribesmen, with *siyādah* "(tribal) chieftaincy" and *ri'āsah* "headman-ship" in his hand.

25) *al-Ḥamāsah*, Tibrizi recension, CCIII, v. 6.

إِذَا شِئْتَ بِوَمَا أَنْ تَسُودَ عَشِيرَةً * فَيَالْحِلْمِ سُدْ لَا بِالتَّسَرُّعِ وَالْثَمِ
وَلِلْحِلْمِ خَيْرٌ فَأَعْلَنْ مَقَبَةً * مِنَ الْجَهْلِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُشَسَّ مِنْ ظَلَمِ

"If you ever want to rule people as their chief, then rule them not with rashness and abusing (i.e. rule them with *hilm*). For, indeed, *hilm* produces a better result than *jahl*—you must keep it well in mind—except in the event of your being treated unjustly with excessive hatred and enmity".²⁶

Now the *hilm* of the tribe of Quraysh was very famous in Arabia. This does not mean simply that the Meccans were all *halim* in the original Bedouin sense; it meant primarily that they were clever and shrewd people, clever enough to develop this age-old virtue of the Arabs into a political wisdom. They knew how to manage and control their naturally hot-blooded, touchy neighbours with a clever tact by, first, controlling themselves. Prof. Montgomery Watt sees in this *hilm* of Quraysh, developed into a political wisdom and ruling technique, the very basis on which the Meccans could build up so successfully their mercantile enterprises.²⁷ And it would not be going too far to ascribe that wise statesmanship displayed by the Prophet himself after the migration to Medina to this inborn quality of the Quraysh. Not entirely, perhaps; but still the biographical traditions about Muhammad show most clearly that he was indeed a first-rate statesman and also a man of *hilm*. There must have been some strong inner relationship between the two qualifications. Only, unlike the other Meccans who used this political talent in business and trade, he used it in building up his religious community (*umma*).

Jahl, as we have seen, is not primarily a permanent nature of man; it denotes occasional outbursts of passion, and as regards its effect on human intellect and reason, it implies momentary, and not necessarily permanent and constant, absence of the balance of mind.

But if a man happens to be constantly in that state, if he is an habitual *jāhil*, then we may reasonably suppose that he is incapable of forming a judicious judgment on any matter. Such a man is mentally blind. He cannot see through things; his sight stops at the surface of things and does not penetrate deep into them. His understanding and observation are bound to be superficial, and he tends to act in all situations according to his superficial understanding.

Thus we arrive at the second meaning of *jahl*: the incapacity of the mind for having deep understanding of things which consequently produces always

26) al-Marrār b. Sa'id, *al-Hamāsah*, CDI, vv. 1-2.

27) See M. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, pp. 10-11.

shallow and rash judgments on everything.

وَأَنسَى نُشَيْبَةَ وَالْجَاهِلُ الْمَقْتَرُ يَعْسَبُ أَنِّي نَسِيٌّ

"How can I ever forget Nushaybah (who has been killed)?! Though a man who cannot see deep (*jāhil*), a *mughammar* (i.e. a man with an insufficient experience, a "greenhorn"), might think (mistakenly) that I am a forgetful man".²⁸

This is exactly paralleled by the usage of the same word in the Koran, in the *Sûrah al-Baqarah*, where mention is made of the poor people, who even in dire poverty know how to keep themselves abstinent, i.e., who behave decently and composedly because of their inborn *ḥayā* "sense of shame" (which was so highly praised by the Prophet, according to Hadīth, as one of the foundations of religion).

يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ

"A man who judges things only by seeing the surface (*jāhil*) may get a wrong impression and consider them rich because of their abstinence and restraint, but thou shalt know them by their mark".²⁹

But of course the Koran, in the majority of cases, uses this word in the sense of shallow observation and superficial judgment in reference to matters that are more properly religious. In this religious sense, *jahl* is the incapacity of a man to understand God's Will behind the veil of visible things and events, the incapacity to see the natural things as so many Divine *āyāt*. For this kind of man, the natural things are just natural things, and not symbols of anything. And since, according to the Koran, God sends down his *āyāt* in the clearest and most evident way—that is, as *bayyināt* "evident (signs)"—*jahl* means the intellectual incapacity to understand even the self-evident religious truth, and even the easiest part of Divine revelation. Examples abound in the Koran. Here I give only one of them:³⁰

وَلَوْ أَنَّا نَزَّلْنَا إِلَهُيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الدَّوْنَى وَحَوَّرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قُبُلًا مَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ يَجْهَلُونَ

"Even if We should sent down the angels to them, and the dead should speak to them, and We should gather all things in array before their own eyes,

28) Abū Dhu'ayb, *Dirwān al-Hudhaliyyin*, I, p. 67, v. 2.

29) II, 274/273.

30) VI, v. 111.

yet they would not be believers, unless God so willed. But most of them are just *jāhils*".

Jahl is not restricted to the superficial observation of things around man; it includes also the incapacity of a man to see "himself", to take the correct and exact measure of himself. He who does not know himself, who cannot see the natural limitation of his capacity, and who therefore tends to go beyond his human bounds is also a *jāhil*. And from this point of view, words like *tughyān* and *baghy* meaning "exceeding the bounds" are often used by the Koran in describing the attitude of the Kāfirs towards God, as a concrete manifestation of *jahl*.

In short, *jahl* in this sense is almost equivalent to mental blindness. The Koran brings out this aspect of *jahl* in a very pertinent way.

لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

"It is not the eyes that are blind, but it is the hearts, which are within the bosoms, that are blind".³¹

They are mentally blind, and mentally deaf; how, then, can we hope them to understand the religious truth?—this is the final verdict passed upon those who are characterized by *jahl* in this sense.

This aspect of the semantic structure of *jahl* makes us understand easily how its opposite, *ḥilm*, came to acquire the meaning of 'aql "reason". Reason can only operate properly when you are calm, as long as you keep the balance of 'aql; the latter is a narrower concept than *ḥilm*. *Ḥilm* is the very basis of "reason" and "intellect." To be very exact, however, it is not a perfect synonym of 'aql; the latter is a narrower concept than *ḥilm*. *Ḥilm* is the very basis of 'aql; it is the unagitated state of the mind which makes the proper activity of 'aql possible, which enables the 'aql to operate calmly and steadily so that it may produce good and right judgments. But, practically, of course, the two come to the same thing.

In a satire (*hiǧā'*) against Banû Ḥarīth b. Ka'b, Ḥassān ibn Thābit uses the word in this particular sense in an extremely interesting way.³²

حَارِ بْنِ كَعْبٍ أَلَا الْأَحْلَامُ تَزْجُرُكُمْ * عَنِّي وَأَنْتُمْ مِنَ الْجَوَيفِ الْجَبَائِخِرِ
لَا تَبَاسَ بِالْقَوْمِ مِنْ طُولٍ وَمِنْ عَظَمٍ * جِسْمُ الْيَقَالِ وَأَحْلَامُ الْعَصَافِيرِ

"O Banû Ḥarīth! do not your intellects (*aḥlām*, pl. of *ḥilm*) prevent you

31) XXII, v. 45/46.

32) *al-Majānī al-Ḥadīthab* ed. al-Bustānī, Vol. II, p. 29.

(lit: scare you back) from attacking me (i.e., by *hijā'*)? But (on reflection I must admit that this is demanding too much of you) for you are all hollow with nothing inside, giants with tiny brains (*jumkhūr* "a man whose body is big but whose intellect is small and weak"). There is nothing wrong in people's being tall and big, but the combination of a body as a mule and an intellect (*ahlām*) as small as that of little birds (is too much!)."

It is perhaps worthy to be noted that the Koran uses the same word in this sense in a very similar way.

أَمْ تَأْمُرُهُمْ أَحْلَامُهُمْ بِهَذَا أَمْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ طَاغُونَ

This is said in reference to the inimical attitude of the Meccans towards the Prophet. "Do their intellects bid them do this? (i.e., are they acting like this in accordance with what their poor intellect commands?) Or are they (by nature) an insolent and arrogant people?"³³

(3) It is not a far cry from this to the third meaning of the word *jahl*, i.e., "ignorance" Here the opposite of *jahl* is no longer *hilm*, but '*ilm* "knowledge". This is, as is well known, the most usual meaning of *jahl* in classical Arabic. This, however, is the least important of the three fundamental meanings of the word in the earlier period. Still, pre-Islamic poetry offers some examples though not very many. 'Antarah's *Mu'allaqah*, for instance, (v. 43):

هَلَّا سَأَلْتَ الْخَيْلَ يَا ابْنَةَ مَالِكٍ * إِنْ كُنْتَ جَاهِلَةً بِمَا لَمْ تَعْلَمِي

The poet, addressing his beloved 'Ablah (Mālik's daughter), says: "Why don't you ask our horsemen, if you are ignorant, about what you do not know?" meaning thereby "everybody knows how brave and valiant I am on the battle field; ask anybody you like if by any chance you do not know this."

This meaning of "lack of knowledge", "lack of information" does not play an important role in the Koran. The word is used mostly either in the first or the second sense. Perhaps we may cite as an example of this:

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِنْ قَرِيبٍ

"God shall forgive only those who do evil in ignorance (*jahālah*) but then quickly repent".³⁴

33) LII, v. 32.

34) IV, v. 21/17; also VI, v. 54.

II FROM *ḤILM* TO *ISLAM*

As the word *jāhiliyyah* itself shows, the word *jahl*—the first and the second meaning—is one of the most important key-terms in the Koran. Without a right understanding of this concept we would not be able to put the new religious conception of Islam in the right place in the history of the religious thought of the Arabs. But, as we have seen, the two fundamental meanings of *jahl* was sharply opposed to the concept of *ḥilm* in pre-Islamic times. Where is it now, this concept of *ḥilm*, in the Koranic system?

Apparently the word *ḥilm* no longer appears on the stage in an important role except when it is used in reference to God Himself. "Allāh is *Ḥalīm*."—this seems to be the only form under which the concept occurs in the Koran in a truly significant way. The *ḥilm* that used to be one of the most conspicuous features of the pre-Islamic mentality, that used to appear almost everywhere in pre-Islamic poetry whenever the poets sang in praise of themselves or others, seems to have ceased to play any decisive role, as a human attribute. What does this mean? Does this mean that the concept, which had once been so important in the ethical life of the Arabs disappeared completely with the rise of the new religion? My answer to this question is in the negative. The explanation I have given of the pair, *jahl*—*ḥilm*, will have made it clear that the idea of *ḥilm* itself continues to live in the Koranic conception of human nature. It is still palpably there, not as a definite concept, but diffused throughout the Koran. In a certain sense the Koran as a whole is dominated by the very spirit of *ḥilm*. The constant exhortation to kindness (*iḥsān*) in human relations, the emphasis laid on justice (*ʿadl*), the forbidding of wrongful violence (*ẓulm*), the bidding of abstinence and control of passions, the criticism of groundless pride and arrogance—all are concrete manifestations of this spirit of *ḥilm*.

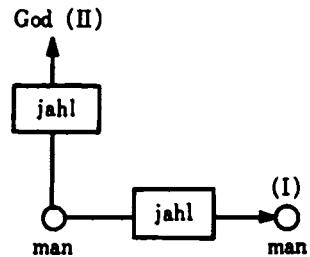
But there is something far more important than this. This particular pattern of human behavior called *jahl* is now in the Koran directed toward God Himself. Hitherto in the pre-Islamic conception *jahl* had nothing at all to do with God or gods. It was concerned exclusively with human beings in their relations with each other; that is to say, *jahl* was a peculiar attitude of a man toward another man or other men. In short *jahl*, whether good or bad, was exclusively a matter of man-to-man relation.

But now with the rise of Islam in Mecca we witness a different and quite

a new situation arising among the Arabs. As noted above the concept of *jahl* is the center of an important network of concepts intimately associated with each other, such as pride in human power, limitless self-confidence, self-sufficiency, refusal to bow before any superior authority, keen sense of honor, haughty attitude of mockery toward one's inferiors, etc. The whole network of these concepts is now in the Koran directed toward the Prophet Muhammad and the Book revealed through him, the Divine *dyāt*, and consequently and ultimately toward God Himself.

In other words, the Koran interprets the attitude of hostility shown by the pagan Arabs toward Divine guidance (*budd*) in terms of this conceptual network of *jahl*. According to the Koran the pagan attitude of hostility is nothing but a concrete manifestation of this *jahl*-mentality which has been so characteristic of the pre-Islamic Arabs.

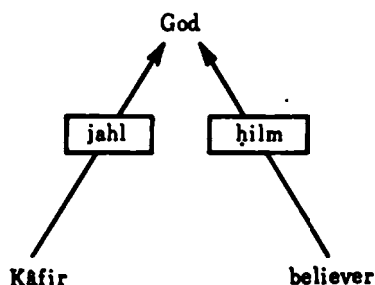
But we must notice that, if interpreted in this way, *jahl* is no longer what it has been; a radical shift of emphasis has occurred in its structure. For in this interpretation, *jahl* is no longer a 'horizontal', i.e. human relation (Direction I); it is a relation between man and God. Here we see pagan Arabs taking the attitude of *jahl* toward God (Direction II), which is, from the point of view of the Koran, an incredible presumptuousness on the part of man, for man is essentially an '*abd*' "absolutely humble servant", and should be nothing else. So *jahl* in this sense must be banished from the presence of the great Lord. What will remain behind? Quite naturally the opposite concept of *hilm*. And this is the only logical consequence, for, in general, when the concept *A* and the concept *B* stand opposed to each other, the negation of *A* logically means the affirmation of *B*. And as a matter of fact, in pre-Islamic times, there was between *jahl* and *hilm* precisely such a relation.



But in the new Islamic conception, this relation does not hold between the two concepts when they are directed toward God. As long as *jahl* has been a purely human behavior-pattern, its negation has always meant *hilm*. In such a situation, when you are told that you should not act toward your brethren in a *jāhil* way, it necessarily implies that you should act in a *ḥalīm* way. But here in the presence of the great Lord, where man is His '*abd*', and should act as behooves an '*abd*', this either-*jahl*-or-*hilm* formula is no longer valid. As an attitude of man toward God, his Lord, *jahl* is of course out of question, but

for that matter *hilm* is equally out of question, because, as we have already seen, *hilm* is essentially based on the concept of "power" (*qudrah*). As conscious control of one's own feelings and emotions, as forbearance, and patience, outwardly it looks like mere meekness and calmness, but behind it there always is the clearest consciousness of one's own superior power which may at any moment transform itself into a terrible outburst of anger.

This is not certainly the proper attitude for man to take toward God who is his Lord. This cannot be the attitude of an '*abd*'.



As noted above, the Koran interprets the Kâfirs' attitude of hostility and non-submission as an extreme case of human arrogance stemming from the *hamiyyah al-jâhiliyyah*. In short, Kâfirs dare to take this incredible attitude of *jahl* toward God. This does not imply, however, that a real believer should

take the alternative attitude of *hilm* toward God (as shown in the Diagram). For in the Koranic view, *hilm* would be no less an outrageous act of going beyond the bounds of man than taking the attitude of *jahl*.

A real believer, i.e. a real '*abd*' "servant" in the fullest sense of the word, should go far beyond the degree of *hilm* in the direction of humbleness and humility before God. All consciousness of self-sufficiency and power should be abandoned; absolute submission is what is required of him. But when "humbleness" reaches this degree, it is no longer *hilm*; it is *islâm*.

Thus we see how the concept of *islâm* is historically affiliated with, and yet at the same time clearly distinguished from, the old concept of *hilm*. From the Koranic point of view, *islâm* in the sense of absolute submission and self-surrender was not a simple downright negation and rejection of *hilm*; it was rather a continuation and development of *hilm*. The new conception pushed ahead and brought this time-honored virtue of the Arabs to its extreme limit, which was so extreme, indeed, that the concept had to go beyond its original boundary and transform itself into something quite different from it: *islâm*. The concept of *islâm* was, in this respect, a radical modification of the concept of *hilm*, which was necessitated by the very fact that now the object with which man was confronted was no longer an ordinary person, but the majestic figure of his own Lord.

This is what I meant earlier by saying that in a certain sense *hilm* was the

pre-religious, pre-Islamic form of *islām*. But of course the concept of *hilm* itself had to disappear from the stage as a basic religious attitude of man toward God, for in a "servant" serving his master sincerely, there should not be even the slightest sense of self-sufficiency and superiority. But the concept of *hilm* cannot subsist if it is deprived of this latter element. In the Koranic conception, only God is fully entitled to be *ḥalīm*—toward His servants, not vice versa.

The fact that the concept of *hilm* as a human attribute ceases to be active in the Koran suggests that here a new conceptual organization is under way, a new 'articulation', to use one of the technical terms which I explained earlier, of the human reality. According to this new conceptual articulation, the vast field which was once covered by the concept of *hilm* has to be entirely reorganized: new lines are being drawn, and new sections are coming into being.

Once the opposition was: *jāhil* . . . *ḥalīm*

Now in the Koran, the concept of *hilm* as the opposite of *jahl* is giving place to a number of new concepts, the most important of which is *islām* with all that is implied by the word.

At the same time, the concept of *jāhil* itself, which still plays a considerable role in the Koranic world-view as a typical attitude of the obstinate and stubborn unbelievers, is being superseded by a still more important concept—that of *kāfir*, again with all that the word implies. And this brings into being a new opposition: *kāfir* . . . *muslim*

This teaches us that behind these two terms we have to read all the religious and ethical implications of the old contrast between *jāhil* and *ḥalīm*, but in an entirely new light coming from the drastic reorganization of the concepts.

III THE CONCEPTION OF RELIGION (*DIN*) AS "OBEDIENCE"

It is not without some hesitation that I take up this problem for discussion in this place, because the whole matter is wrapped in philological uncertainties that are almost hopelessly difficult to clear up. The major argument of this section must necessarily be highly problematical because the key word *din* "religion" which forms the very center of the whole discussion is itself problematical as regards its original meaning.

If, in spite of all this, I have decided not to renounce wholly the attempt

to analyze the meaning structure of this word, it is mainly for a reason that is of particular relevance to the topic of this chapter, the Lord-servant relation between God and man: namely, because the meaning of the word *din* contains among others a remarkable semantic element of "obedience" (*ṭāʿah*) and "servant-ness" (*ʿubūdiyyah*). To be sure, it is not certain whether the meaning of "religion" may be traced back to that of "obedience" and "servant-ness". But this is not an impossibility. Besides, the Koran, as we shall see presently, consciously connects these two concepts with one another.

Din is certainly one of the most controversial words in the whole Koranic vocabulary. The trouble with us, however, is that we cannot in any way lightly pass over the difficulty by simply disregarding the word, because it is an extremely important key-term in the Koran. In any case, we must begin by admitting that it is one of the most difficult Koranic key-terms to handle semantically. The etymology itself is uncertain, to begin with. Outwardly we have before our eyes one simple monosyllabic word; but it is quite possible that we have, in reality, more than one word under exactly the same form. That is to say, two or more independent words going back to different sources may have come to assume in course of time one and the same form. Besides, there is also possibility of some at least of its various meanings being of foreign origin.

The word *din* has two important meanings distinguishable in the Koran: (1) religion and (2) judgment. According to some scholars,³⁵ of these two fundamental meanings, the first i.e., "religion" is of Persian origin, *den* in Middle Persian meaning roughly "(systematic) religion",³⁶ and the second, that of "judgment" goes back to Hebrew; the Hebrew word *din* means "judgment"; moreover the particular combination 'Day of Judgment' (*yaum al-din*) is so typically Jewish.

Thus we are here faced with a very complex and complicated problem. As regards this foreign origin theory I fully admit that it is not impossible, but at the same time I cannot help feeling somehow that this is simplifying the matter too much. Before resorting to this kind of explanation, we should, I think, first try to see whether it is not possible to explain the word within the confines of Arabic itself. By this I do not of course imply that there should be one original meaning attached to the root *DYN* to which all the various meanings might be reduced. This is quite impossible linguistically. In a case

35) Cf. Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾān*, Baroda, 1938.

36) Cf. Wilfred C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, New York, 1963, pp. 287-289.

like this a modern linguist assumes from the very beginning the existence of more than one independent root under one common form. The phenomenon is a very common one of 'pure polysemy'.

With this in view, let us begin by noting that an examination of pre-Islamic literature brings to light the three following root meanings: (1) "custom" "habit", (2) "requital", and (3) "obedience".

The first of these three would be simply dismissed as of no relevance to our present topic, if it were not for the fact that there is a possibility of our deriving the meaning of "ritual practices" attached as an important semantic element to the word *dīn* from this root meaning of "custom". But this is capable also of being explained as a case of 'reification' of the more fundamental concept of "religion" in the sense of "personal faith". However this may be, I must content myself here with giving one example from Jahili literature.

أَلَا بَاتَ مَنْ حَوْلِي نِيَامًا وَرَقَدَا * وَعَاوَدَنِي حَزَنِي الَّذِي يَتَجَدَّدُ
وَعَاوَدَنِي دِينِي قَبْتُ كَأَنَّمَا * خِلَالِ صُلُوعِ الصَّدْرِ شَرَعٌ مُمَدَّدُ

This is part of an elegy which a poet of the Hudhayl tribe composed bewailing the death of a dear friend. "All those around me have fallen asleep, and once again there comes back to me my sorrow that renews itself. There comes back to me again my habitual state (*dīn*), and I feel as if between the ribs of my breast (i.e., within my breast) there were a string of lute fully stretched. (i.e., my breast resounds with sobbing like the sound of a stretched string of a musical instrument)".³⁷

Turning now to the second root meaning, "requital", we may do well to remark at the outset that the word *dīn* with this meaning is also found very frequently in pre-Islamic poetry. Here is a typical example of it³⁸ out of a great number.

فَلَمَّا صَرَخَ الشَّرُّ * فَأَمْسَى وَهُوَ عُرْبَانُ
وَلَمْ يَبْقَ سِوَى الْعُنَا * نِ دِنَانِهِمْ كَمَا دَانُوا

"(We had borne their wrong very patiently), but when their wrong became so evident, and began to show itself so nakedly that there remained nothing but our taking an offensive attitude on our part, we (rose up) and requited (*dinnā*, a verbal form corresponding to *dīn*) them as they had requited us (i.e., as they had done wrong to us—the last expression is what is known in rhetoric

37) Sa'īdah b. Ju'ayyah, *Diwān al-Hudhaliyyīn*, I, p. 236, vv. 1-2.

38) Sahl b. Shabān, *al-Hamāsah*, II, v. 4.

as *mushâkalah*, the phrase being equivalent to *dannâ-hum ka-mâ fa'alû*”).

The Koran, too, uses the same word in a verbal form—passive participle—with exactly the same basic meaning in the Sûrah *al-Şaffât*:

أَفَذَا نُنْتَزَعْنَا رُكَّابًا وَعِظَامًا أَتِنَّا لَمَدِينُونَ

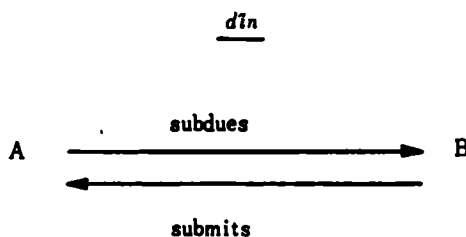
“What! (the unbelievers ask sarcastically) when we are dead and have become dust and bones, shall we then be requited (*madînûn*)”.

It is quite significant for our present purposes that this is said precisely in reference to the concept of the Day of Judgment. That is to say, the Day of Judgment (*yaum al-dîn*) is exactly the day on which all men without exception will be requited (*madînûn*) each according to what he has done in the present world. And this is the meaning of *dîn* in this particular combination.

As is evident, the meaning of “requital”, i.e. “judgment”, in this context is of supreme importance in the world-view of the Koran. But its proper place is in the semantic field of eschatology. It is not of direct relevance to our present topic. What is directly relevant to it is the third root meaning of *dîn*.

The third root meaning of the word *dîn* is, as we have indicated above, “obedience”. To be very strict, this understanding is not exact because “obedience” represents only one aspect of the matter. Properly speaking, *dîn* (or the verb *dâna*) belongs to that large category of words known as *aqdâd*, i.e. words having two contrary meanings.

In other terms, the word *dîn* has two opposite faces, one positive and the other negative. On its positive side, it means “to subdue, oppress, govern by power”, and on its negative side it means “to submit, yield, to be obedient and submissive”. There is nothing surprising about this. As many other words of this category, the particular perspective crystallized in this word represents a global view of the matter which enables us to consider the same thing from both ends.



This is why in many cases the same word *dîn* is capable of being interpreted as both *qahr* “exercise of superior power in subduing others” and *ţâ‘ah* “obedience”, without our being able to tell which of these two possible ways of interpretation is right. The truth of the

matter is that both are meant at the same time without distinction, the concept of *dîn* being comprehensive of these two contrary directions.

The classical example of it is provided by a verse by 'Amr b. Kulthûm:³⁹

وَرِثْنَا مَجْدَ عَلَمَةِ بْنِ سَيْفٍ * أَبَاحَ لَنَا حُصُونَ الْمَجْدِ دِينًا

"We have inherited the glory of (one of our forefathers) 'Alqamah; it is he who has made lawful to us (i.e. who has conquered for us) many strongholds of glory by force (*dīnan*=*qabran*)"—or "reducing them to the state of absolute obedience and submissiveness (*dīnan*=*ṭā'atan*)".

The word seems to show the same conceptual 'ambivalence', when Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā, describing the actual situation of his tribe which is in complete disorder and confusion, says:

مَرَجَ الدِّينَ "The *dīn* is in utter confusion".

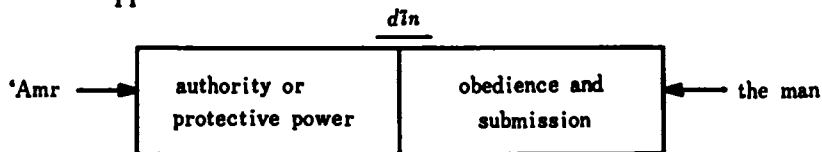
This must mean that the tribe is in the state of anarchy so that nobody is certain as to who is to rule and who is to obey.

The same is probably true of the expression *fi dīni fulān*⁴⁰ which is very common in pre-Islamic poetry, "in somebody's *dīn*". The expression belongs, in my opinion, to this category, although the old scholiasts almost unanimously take this word in the sense of "obedience". Here is a typical example:

لَتَيْنِ حَلَلْتَ يَجُورُ فِي بَنِي أَسَدٍ * فِي دِينِ عَمْرٍو وَحَالَتَ بَيْنَنَا فَدَاكُ

The poet here threatens a man of Banū Asad who has done him wrong, and says: "(the poisoned arrow of my satire (*hijā'*) will reach you and overtake you) even if you (flee from me and) settle down in the Wādī Jaww among Banū Asad in 'Amr's *dīn*, and even if Fadak separates between us".⁴¹

'Amr referred to in this verse is the famous king of Ḥīrah, 'Amr b. Hind b. al-Mundhir Mā' al-Samā', and the phrase *fi dīni 'Amr* means in this context your becoming a subject of 'Amr and thereby putting yourself under the protection of his power". Thus the concept of *dīn* here comprises both "obedience" (*ṭā'ab*) and "authority" (*sultān*). In other word, the same thing is being looked at from two opposite sides:



Looked at from the side of King 'Amr, it is his *sultān*, "authority" or

39) *Mu'allaqah*, v. 61.

40) فِي دِينِ فُلَانٍ

41) *Diwān Zuhayr*, p. 138, v. 1.

"protective power", but from the side of the man who shelters himself behind the royal influence, it is *ʾiḍāʿ* "obedience" to the king.

This interpretation must, I think, be applied to the Koranic verse XII, 76, where we are told how Joseph in Egypt succeeds, by a clever trick, to detain his younger brother Benjamin in custody.

مَا كَانَ لِیَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِی دِیْنِ الْمَلِکِ إِلَّا أَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

"(Thus We contrived for Joseph's sake); he could not have kept his brother in the *dīn* of the Egyptian king, except that God willed."

This phrase is usually taken to mean "according to the king's law" (*fi dīni al-malik*=*fi shar'i al-malik*, or *fi qānūni-hi*). This is, I think, one of the instances of reading into the Koran a later conception that could only arise after the concept of *shar'* as "religious law" had been well established.

In the same way, the word *dīn* may be taken in the sense of both "humble obedience and "absolute rule" in XVI 54/52, an exceedingly beautiful passage which describes how all things in the heavens and the earth are "making prostration before God" expressing thereby profound humility and absolute obedience.

وَلَهُ مَا فِی السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَهُ الدِّیْنُ وَاصِبًا

"To God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. His is the *dīn* for ever!"

The word *dīn* in this verse has—if the above interpretation is right—a double meaning. On the one hand, it means the absolute *Sulṭān* of God, and, on the other, i.e. if looked at from the side of His creature, it means "absolute obedience".

Very often, however, the word is used in pre-Islamic poetry in the more specified sense of "obedience", "being ruled" and "being a servant".

أَبَوْا دِیْنَ الْمُلُوكِ فَهُمْ لَقَاحٌ *

"They refused to be ruled by the kings, for they were so filled with self-confidence (*laqāḥ* is the infinitive of the verb *laqiḥa* meaning to "conceive" "become pregnant", here in the metaphorical sense of "being pregnant with self-confidence")".⁴²

We may do well to compare this with verse 25 of the *Mu'allaqah* of 'Amr b. Kulthūm where exactly the same thought is expressed by means of the verb *dāna* itself:

42) 'Abid b. al-Abras, *Diwān*, VI, v. 2.

.....عَمِينَا الْمَلِكَ فِيهَا أَنْ تَدِينَنَا

"We used to disobey the king in those days for fear of becoming his slaves."
Similarly in the following verse by an anonymous poet:

إِذَا أَتَيْتَنِي وَاحْتَبَيْتَ بِالسَّيْفِ دَانَ لَهُ * شَوْسُ الرِّجَالِ خُطُوعَ الْجَرَبِ الطَّالِي

"Whenever he attended the tribal gathering or girded on a sword, even the haughtiest men became humble to him just like mangy camels obey docilely the man who smears them with pitch".⁴³ The reference is to the fact that the mangy camels show themselves passively obedient to the man who smears their bodies with ointment, because it makes them feel pleasant.

This concept of absolute obedience and humble submission with a tacit understanding that there is behind the stage someone exercising an overwhelming power and domination may very well have been the origin of the important meaning of "religion" attached to the word *dīn*. And if this is so it would be quite unnecessary to go beyond the limits of Arabic and seek its origin in the Persian word *dīn* (MP *den*, Avest. *daena*). The formal coincidence might have been purely accidental.⁴⁴ I think this is quite possible and probable, because this conception of religion based on the image of a submissive servant ruled absolutely by a powerful king is quite in line with the typically Semitic mode of thinking.

I do not think it a pure accident that in the Koran, in two crucial passages, the word *dīn* is virtually defined in terms of '*abada*', i.e. "to worship God" in the sense of "serving Him as a humble servant who obeys his master".

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْ دِينِي فَلَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ أَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ

"O men, if you are in doubt of my religion (*dīni*), then (I declare that) I serve (*a'budu*) not those whom you serve (*ta'budūna*) apart from God, but I serve (*a'budu*) God".⁴⁵

يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ
مَا عَبَّدْتُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَلِي دِينِي

43) *al-Hamidsab*, DCCIX, v. 1.

44) Contrast this with an adverse view advocated by Dr. Wilfred C. Smith in his recent book, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (pp. 98-102), according to which the Arabic word *dīn* was a local variety of an 'international term' of Persian origin, *dīn* or *dēn*, which had spread widely over the countries of the Middle East.

45) X, v. 104. *a'budu*, *ta'budūna*: from the root 'BD, from which comes the word '*abd*' "servant" "slave".

O unbelievers, I serve (*a'buda*) not what you serve (*ta'budûna*), nor do you serve what I serve. And I shall never serve what you serve, nor will you serve what I serve. To you your religion (*dinu-kum*) and to me my religion (*dîni*).⁴⁶

Equally remarkable is the combination in the following verse⁴⁷ of the verb '*abada*' with the expression "making the religion (*dîn*) sincere" with which we are already familiar:

وَإِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ

"I have been commanded to serve (*a'buda*) God making my religion (*dîn*) pure and sincere".

The combination of *dîn* with '*abada*' in the passages just quoted cannot possibly be merely contextual. It is understandable only on the supposition that there is a profound inner connection between the two concepts. These passages can be taken almost as a definition of the word *dîn* suggesting how it should be understood rightly.

It is worthy to be pointed out, too, that, at a more formalized level, the same word *dîn* is also associated in the Koran with the word *islâm*. We must remember in this connection that, as we have seen above, the concept of *islâm* was, originally at least, based on the conception of man's being a "submissive" servant of God.

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ

"Verily, the (true) religion (*dîn*) with God is *islâm*".⁴⁸

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

"This day I have perfected your religion (*dîn*) and completed My favor unto you, and I have approved *islâm* for your religion (*dîn*)".

According to Dr. Wilfred Cantwell Smith⁵⁰ the word "religion" in general may been taken in two different, although closely related, senses; one is "religion" as a deep personal matter; the existential act of each individual person of believing in something, that is, in short, "faith"; and the other is "religion" in a 'reified' sense, i.e. as something common to a community, an objective

46) CIX, vv. 1-6, the whole Sûrah.

47) XXXIX, v. 14/11. It goes without saying that in this and similar contexts "making the religion sincere" does not imply at all 'momentary sincerity' as it does in the case of Kâfirs.

48) III, v. 17/19.

49) V, v. 5/3.

50) *op. cit.* pp. 51-53.

communal matter, comprising all the creeds and ritual practices shared by all members of that community. Both of these meanings are found in the Koran and this double usage of the same word seems to go back to Jahiliyyah, although in Jahiliyyah, except perhaps in Jewish and Christian circles, "religion" as a personal existential act does not seem to have been clearly formulated and clearly distinguished from "religion" in the sense of a whole body of ritual practices. Perhaps we should rather think that such a distinction itself was something quite alien to the religious consciousness of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Perhaps in looking for such a distinction in Jahili thought we are unconsciously trying to read into it a conception which is a product of later ages.

When, for example, the poet al-Nābighah says, in reference to the Christians of Ghassân,⁵¹ *dīnu-hum qawīmūn* we cannot decide definitely whether he means that their faith is steadfast or their religion, Christianity, is an upright religion. Likewise when the Ḥanīf poet Umayyah calls his standpoint *dīn al-ḥanīfah*, "the Hanīfitic religion" it is not clear whether what is meant is a 'reified' religion or a non-reified personal faith—perhaps both at the same time, we should say, if we are to stick to this basic distinction.

As to the meaning of *dīn* as a system of ritual practices it is quite certain that the concept was firmly established in the mind of the pre-Islamic Arabs. I will give here a most interesting example.⁵²

حَيَاكِ وَدِّ فَإِنَّا لَا يَحِلُّ لَنَا * لَهُو النِّسَاءِ وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ قَدْ عَزَمَا

The poet is taking leave of a beautiful girl who is trying to tempt him, and declares that he has now more serious things to be concerned with than love-making. *Wadd*, by the way, is a pagan idol mentioned also in the Koran (LXXI, 22/23). "May Wadd give you a long life! (i.e. Fare you well!) for dalliance with women is no longer lawful to me, since I have firmly made up my mind to concentrate upon *dīn*".

The context shows clearly that "religion" (*dīn*) in this verse refers to the pagan, pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage to Mecca. The poet says that now that he has made up his mind firmly and seriously to make his pilgrimage to Mecca, sporting with women is *ḥarām*. The point of immediate relevance to

51) quoted above, see Chap IV, IV.

52) al-Nābighah, *Diwān*, p. 142, v. 3. This famous and extremely important verse has long been misunderstood in various ways in the West. For the details. see C. A. Nallino, "Il verso di an-Nābighah sul dio Wadd", in *Raccolta di Scritti*, Vol. III, VI. In the *Diwān*, the second word *wadd* is replaced by *rabbī* "My Lord". That this is not the original form is known from Yāqūt's Geographical Dictionary *Muʿjam al-Buldān* (ed. Wüstenfeld IV, 913).

our present topic is that here we have a case in which the word *dīn* is used clearly in the sense of *hajj*, i.e. "pilgrimage" as a ritual.

This particular usage of the word *dīn* by al-Nābighah would seem to suggest that when the pre-Islamic Arabs used the expression *dīn al-naṣārā* "the religion of the Christians", for example, they presumably meant thereby "religion" as something reified, an objectively established thing, i.e. a whole system consisting of a certain number of creeds and ritual practices that are shared by a community.⁵³

The Koran uses the word obviously in the reified and non-reified senses. The best and the simplest example of the non-reified type is supplied by the expression "making the *dīn* sincere", where the word *dīn* cannot but mean personal faith in God, whether it be just momentary or permanent. As an example of the reified use, we may cite III, v. 66/73, where the Jews are depicted saying among themselves:

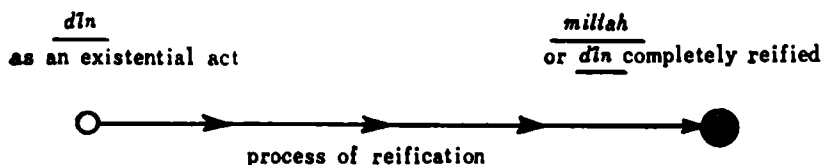
لَا تَوَدُّونَا إِلَّا لِمَنْ تَبِعَ دِينَكُمْ

"Do not trust except those who follow your religion".

In the verse already quoted above (V.v. 5/3) which runs, "This day I have perfected your religion...and I have approved *islām* for your religion", *dīn* seems to mean almost an objective, reified "religion".

If we go still further in this direction i.e. the direction of reification, then the concept changes into *millah*, which is religion as an objective "thing" in the full sense of the word, a formal system of creeds and rituals which constitutes the principle of unity for a particular religious community and works as the basis of its social life.. Unlike the word *dīn* which still retains the original connotation of personal—existential, we might say—faith and belief however far we may go in the direction of reification, *millah* connotes something rigid, objective, formal and it reminds us always of the existence of a society based on one common religion.

The relation between these two key-terms may be shown by this simple diagram:



⁵³) Theodor Nöldeke in his *Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Poesie der alten Araber* (Hannover, 1864), p. 52, cites from *al-Aghānī* an interesting verse in which a Jew contemporary of the Prophet uses the expression *dīn Muḥammad* in reference to Islam.

Din originates from a purely personal "obedience", as we have seen. It goes on being reified; in the last stages of this development approaching more and more the concept of *millah*, *din* becomes almost synonymous with the latter. This point will become clear if we compare III, 66/73 which we have quoted above with 11,114/120 where exactly the same situation is referred to by means of *millah* instead of *din*.

وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ

"Neither the Jews nor the Christians will ever be satisfied with thee, unless thou follow their religion (*millah*)".

The synonymy of *din* and *millah* appears more clearly in VI, 162/161 where we read;

إِنِّي هَدَانِي رَبِّي إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ دِينًا قِيَمًا مِّلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا

"As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path, a right religion (*din*) the religion (*millah*) of Abraham who was a man of pure monotheism".

It is significant that we see here three important concepts equated with each other: straight path=right *din*=*millah* of Abraham.

But if we retrace our steps towards the starting-point (*din*), then we will see *din* and *millah* becoming more and more clearly distinguished from each other, and, therefore, non-interchangeable. For example, in XXXIX, v. 2 we read;

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ

"Verily, We have sent down to thee the Book with truth. So worship (*u'bud* "serve as a servant") God, making the *din* sincere for Him".

Here God addresses these words directly to the Prophet Muhammad and exhorts him to serve God as behooves His servant. It is evidently impossible to replace the word *din* in this context by *millah*. For here the matter concerns the religious attitude of each individual person, and not the objectively formalized system of religion. *Millah* is essentially a matter of *ummah*, while *din* in its original, non-reified, phase, is a matter of each individual believer.

CHAPTER IX

ETHICAL RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

I GOD OF MERCY

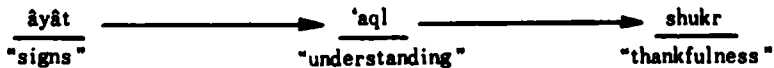
We have, in what precedes, dealt with three different aspects of the basic personal relation between God and man. In this chapter, we turn to the fourth—and last, according to our classification—relation between them i.e. the ethical relation. It is one of the most conspicuous features of the religious thought that has originated in the Semitic world, whether of Judaism, Christianity or Islam, that the concept of God is essentially ethical. And since, in this view God Himself is essentially ethical, the relation between God and man must also be of an ethical nature. In other words, God acts towards man in an ethical way, that is, as God of Justice and Goodness, and man, correspondingly, is expected to respond to this Divine initiative also in an ethical way. Whether man really does respond in the right ethical way, is a crucial and decisive moment in the structure of a religion like Islam. It is not a mere matter of human goodness or badness as it used to be in pre-Islamic times; ethics is now an integral part of religion; the whole religion is involved in it, and is indeed dependent on the ethical response of man.

From this point of view, the God of the Koran shows two different aspects that are fundamentally opposed to each other. For a pious, believing mind, these two aspects are but two different sides of one and the same God, but for the logic of ordinary reason, they would seem contradictory, and, in fact, many thinkers have been at pains to reconcile these two aspects with one another. The problem is common to both the Koran and the Old Testament.

In one of these two aspects Allāh reveals Himself as God of infinite goodness and benevolence, God of unfathomable love and mercy, a gracious, a merciful and forgiving God. This aspect of God is referred to in the Koran by such key-words as *ni'mah* "favor", *faql* "bounty", *rahmah* "mercy", *maghfirah* "forgiveness" and the like.

The problem has been so much discussed and so fully dealt with by all those who have studied the Koran and Islam from the religious point of view that I have almost nothing more to add.¹

Only one point must be mentioned here, which is more directly relevant to the purpose of the present study. The fact that God acts towards man in such a gracious way and shows all sorts of goodness and kind consideration in the form of *âyat* "signs"—this initial fact already determines the only right response possible on the part of human beings. And that response is "thankfulness" or "gratitude" (*shukr*), thankfulness for all the favors He is bestowing upon them. But as I have said before, this response is conceivable only on the basis of a right understanding and estimation of the Divine *âyat*. Thankfulness in this sense is possible only when man has grasped the meaning of the *âyat*.



This is the typical scheme of the conceptual associations relating to this phenomenon. And thus, for the first time in the history of ideas among the Arabs, *shukr* "thankfulness" became a religious concept. The tremendous importance of this new concept will be seen from the fact that it is, so to speak, the human counterpart of the initial Divine Goodness, and is, in this way, inseparably linked with one of the most characteristic aspects of the Divine nature, and also from the fact that from "thankfulness" to "belief" or "faith" it is merely a matter of one step, so much so that in many cases *shukr* is in the Koran almost synonymous with *imân* "belief". This we saw already when we discussed the concept of *âyah*.

The opposite of *shukr* is *kufr* the proper meaning of which is "ungratefulness" or "ingratitude". Without any further explanation it will be quite easy to see how this concept of ingratitude, which before Islam, had nothing at all to do with religion, came to assume in the Koranic system a peculiarly religious significance.

But before it began to be understood in this religious sense, the conceptual structure itself was there in Jahiliyyah firmly established. And no wonder, for even in ordinary mundane relations among men the human ethics everywhere demands the actualization of this structure. When somebody has shown you some special favor, that is, has conferred upon you a *ni'mah*, your natural reac-

1) For a philological analysis of the key-terms of this field, see Daud Rahbar, *op. cit.*, chapter XIII and chapter XVIII.

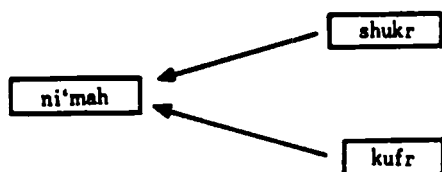
tion to it should be gratitude and thankfulness. This is one of the most basic laws governing the ethical relations among men. But it is also an undeniable fact that there is an alternative reaction, which violates this very basic moral law. And unfortunately, the human nature seems to incite and instigate man to act very often in this way. As the Koran itself says:

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ "Verily man is very ungrateful to his Lord!"²

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَكَفُورٌ مُّبِينٌ "Verily, man is clearly ungrateful!"³

Thus, whether religious or non-religious, "ingratitude" or "ungratefulness" is the name of this way of responding on the part of a man to goodness shown

by someone else. This structure itself remains the same regardless of whether the *ni'mah* "favor" that has been conferred upon him be of a secular nature or of a religious



nature. And the pre-Islamic Arabs also used to live according to the dictates of the supreme moral rule: "*shukr* for *ni'mah*". The following verse by a poet of the Hudhayl tribe brings out this conceptual structure in a very clear and concise form:

فَإِنْ تَشْكُرُونِي تَشْكُرُوا لِي نِعْمَةً * وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُونِي لَا أَكْفِيكُمْ شُكْرِي

"If you thank me, (it is but natural, for by so doing) you would be showing gratitude to me for a favor (*ni'mah*) I have conferred upon you, but if you take the attitude of *kufr* to me, I will never force upon you gratitude to me".⁴

And Salamah b. al-Khurshub, referring to a mare whose unusually swift legs saved the life of a man out of the danger of death:

فَأَنْتِ عَلَيْهِمَا بِأَنْتِي هِيَ أَهْلُهُ * وَلَا تَكْفُرْنَاهَا لَا فَلَاحَ لِكَاثِرِ

"Praise her well with a praise which is fitting, and be not ungrateful (*takfuran*) to her, for there can be no good future for the ungrateful (*kāfir*)".⁵

And 'Antarah, still more tersely:

فَلَا تَكْفُرِ النَّمَى "Never be ungrateful for a favor"⁶

2) C, v. 6; *kanūd* is a synonym of *kafūr*.

3) XLIII, v. 14/15.

4) al-'Ajlān b. Khulayd, *Diwān al-Hudhaliyyin*, III, p. 113, v. 1

5) *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, V, v. 7.

6) *Diwān*, p. 46, v. 3; *ni'ma*=*ni'mah*

The Koran takes up this structure just as it is and raises it up to a religious level, as it does in many other cases. The conceptual structure or formula is still exactly the same, but now it is made to work on the higher level of spiritual relation between God and man, the *ni'mah* being in this case the Divine favor to which man responds either rightly with *shukr* or wrongly with *kufr*.

Quite naturally, the concept of *shukr* "gratitude" in this particular semantic field develops easily into that of sincere "faith" (*imān*), and correspondingly, *kufr*, losing rapidly the original connotation of "ingratitude", transforms itself into the concept of "disbelief", and thus comes to stand in direct conceptual opposition to *imān*.

كَيْفَ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ

"How shall God guide people who turn to disbelief after having believed?"⁷

قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا بِاللَّهِ آمَنُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ

"Those who are haughty say: As for us, we disbelieve in that which you believe in".⁸

This semantic transformation of *kufr* from "ingratitude" to "disbelief" was effected more completely than that of *shukr* from "gratitude" to "belief", because in this latter case the existence of the very word *imān* made unnecessary, or rather prevented, the growth of another word which would replace it. While in the case of "disbelief", there was no such pre-existent word for the concept, and so *kufr* just came in, so to speak, and took the vacant seat.

II GOD OF WRATH

To those who take *kufr* instead of *shukr* or *imān*, that is, to those who stubbornly refuse to humble themselves before God, and also to those who are naturally careless and frivolous who spend their time in jesting and playing, laughing, and merry-making, never thinking of the Hereafter, in short, "indifferent" and "careless" people (*ghāfilūn*)—to those people God shows his other face.

7) III, v. 80/86.

8) VII, v. 74/76.

Here Allah is God of stern unrelaxing justice, the unrelenting Judge on the Day of Judgment, terrible in retribution, (*shadīd al-'iqāb*) Lord of vengeance (*dhū intiqām*), whose anger (*ghaḍab*) will hurl anybody into ruin on whom it alights.⁹

This aspect of God has also been fully discussed by all those who have ever studied the Koran from the religious point of view, so much so that it would seem unnecessary even to mention it now. So here I will only take up the human side of the matter, the problem, that is, how according to the Koran, man should respond to this aspect of God.

The pivotal point of all this is the eschatological concept of the Day of Judgment, with God Himself presiding over everything as the stern, strict and righteous judge, before whom men stand only in silence with bowed heads. The image of this decisive day should be held up constantly before the eyes of men in such a way that it might lead them to absolute earnestness, instead of levity and carelessness, in life. And this is the dominant note of the Islamic piety. All readers of the Koran cannot fail to notice, that this note of absolute earnestness in life coming from the consciousness of the impending Day of Judgment is particularly strong in the Meccan period. This is *taqwā* in its original sense.

The word *taqwā* lost its extremely strong eschatological coloring as time went on and finally came to mean practically the same thing as "piety". But it denoted originally a very peculiar mood connected directly with the concept of the Judgment Day.

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

"Fear God, for surely God is severe in punishment".¹⁰

The combination of the three words *ittiqa* "fear", *Allāh*, '*iqāb* "punishment" in this short sentence brings out very clearly the basic structure of the Koranic *taqwā* in its original form. The *taqwā* in this sense is an eschatological concept, meaning as it does "eschatological fear of Divine chastisement". From this original meaning comes the meaning of "pious fear (of God)", and then finally, "piety" pure and simple.

Now what did the word *taqwā* (or rather the verb *ittaqa*) mean in Jahiliyyah? We must remark in the first place that in pre-Islamic times the word was not commonly used in a religious sense at all, except perhaps in the partic-

9) XX, v. 83/81.

10) V, v. 3/2.

ular circle of the Ḥanīfs and those who were conspicuously under the influence of Judaism like the poet Zuhayr b. Abi Sulmā. The word *muttaqī* (from *taqwā*) "pious believer" (in the monotheistic sense) occurs, as we saw earlier, in the poetry of the Ḥanīf poet, Umayyah b. Abi al-Ṣalt; also in the *Diwān* of Labīd, whom I regard as almost a Ḥanīf in his religious outlook. Here I give an extremely interesting example from the *Diwān* of Zuhayr b. Abi Sulmā:

وَمِنْ ضَرَّتِهِ التَّقْوَىٰ وَيَعِصِمُهُ * مِنْ سَيِّئِ الشَّرَّاتِ اللَّهُ وَالرَّحِمُ

"The *taqwā* is of his nature. It is Allāh Himself who guards him from all fatal false steps and then (the principle of never breaking) ties of blood".¹¹

That this was not normally the meaning of the word in Jahiliyyah must be clear to all readers of pre-Islamic literature. And fortunately enough for our purpose, the verb *ittaqa* was one of the favorite words of the pre-Islamic poets. We meet with the word almost everywhere, always with exactly the same basic conceptual structure, and we have a great number of examples at hand. They show definitely that the word did not carry any religious connotation, let alone the meaning of "piety".

What is, then the basic conceptual structure disclosed by these examples? Nothing is more illuminating in this respect than the formula given by al-Tibrizī in his commentary on *Diwān al-Ḥamāsah*¹² which runs:

الْإِشَاءُ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ مَا تَخَافُهُ حَاجِزًا يَحْفَظُكَ

"*Ittaqa* means that you place between yourself (A) and something you are afraid of (B), something (C) which might protect you by preventing it (B) from reaching you". In short, it means self-defence by means of something. The general situation is this: A man (A) perceives something (B) coming towards him, which looks dangerous, destructive, or at least harmful. He does not like it to reach him; he must stop it before it reaches him and does harm to him. So he puts between himself and the thing (B) something (C) which is strong enough to stop its oncoming. All the pre-Islamic instances of this verb, however complex and complicated in outward form, are capable of being interpreted in terms of this basic formula. Here are a few typical examples. The first one is from the *Mu'allaqah* of 'Antarah:¹³

B —————> [C] <———— A

is strong enough to stop its oncoming. All the pre-Islamic instances of this verb, however complex and complicated in outward form, are capable of being interpreted in terms of this basic formula. Here are a few typical examples. The first one is from the *Mu'allaqah* of 'Antarah:¹³

11) *Diwān Zuhayr*, p. 162, v. 2.

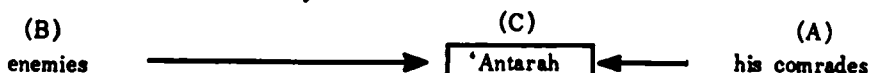
12) CCLIV, v. 5.

13) *Mu'allaqah*, v. 64.

إِنْ يَتَّقُونَ بَيْنَ الْأَيْتَةِ لَمْ أَخِمْ * عَنْهَا وَلَكِنِّي تَضَاقِقَ مَقْلَمِي

"When (my comrades) put me between themselves and the spears of the enemies, (that is to say, when my friends pushed me ahead in front of them so that they might protect themselves behind me, I myself being their shield), I did not flinch at all; but—so he adds—(to my regret) I could not in any case advance very much because there was no more place left in front of me (i.e. there were so many enemies in front of me)".

The situation is evidently like this:



The next one, from the *Mu'allaqah* of Zuhayr, discloses exactly the same pattern:¹⁴

وَقَالَ سَأَتُضِي حَاجَتِي ثُمَّ أَتَمِّي * عَدُوِّي بِأَلْفٍ مِنْ وَرَائِي مُلْجَمٍ

"He said (to himself): I will satisfy my desire (i.e. I will kill the man who has killed my brother), then I (A) will defend myself (*attaqi*) against the enemies (B) (who will surely come to take revenge) with one thousand horses (C) all bridled in support of my cause".

The next example is somewhat more complicated, albeit with exactly the same underlying structure. It comes from *Diwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*. The poet is al-Marrār b. Munqidh¹⁵ who, although of the Umayyad period, composed his poems in the typically Jahili spirit.

تَتَّقِي الْأَرْضَ وَصَوَانَ الْحَصَى * بَوَاقٍ مُجَمَّرٍ غَيْرِ مِعْرٍ

This is part of a description of the she-camel of the poet. My she-camel, he says, guards herself (*tattaqi*) from being hurt by the stony ground with her hard hoofs. Literally: "She puts between herself and the ground and sharp flint stones a hard one (i.e. hard hoof) which is compact and with its ring of hair still intact."

The Koran, too, offers an extremely interesting example¹⁶ in which the verb *ittaqa* is used in exactly the same physical, and not spiritual, sense.

أَفَمَنْ يَتَّقِي بِوَجْهِهِ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

"Is a man who, on the Day of Resurrection, can only guard himself against

¹⁴) *Mu'allaqah*, v. 36, *Diwān* p. 22, v. 2.

¹⁵) *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, XVI, v. 30.

¹⁶) XXXIX, v. 25/24.

the evil of Divine chastisement with his face...." The ironical implication being that on that day his hands, with which he ordinarily defends himself against danger, are tied up to his neck so that he has only his face to defend himself with. The sentence itself is left unfinished; the full meaning is somewhat like this: Is such a man the same as those who are completely safe from chastisement?

But this is rather an exceptional case in the Koran;; there *ittaqa* occurs almost always in contexts of a religious nature. In Jahiliyyah, on the contrary, the verb is mostly used in a physical or material sense. The utmost to which Jahiliyyah goes in this direction is represented by those cases in which the word is used in a moral sense, i.e. a degree more spiritualized than the purely physical and material sense.

The following example¹⁷ is of particular interest in this respect, because it discloses the basic structure of this concept as applied to the moral sphere of life:

وَمَنْ يَجْعَلِ الْمَعْرُوفَ مِنْ دُونِ عِرْضِهِ * يَفِرَّهُ وَمَنْ لَا يَتَّقِ الشَّمَّ يُشَمُّ

"He who puts acts of generosity between his personal honor and (the possible reproach by others) will make his honor increase more and more, while he who does not guard himself (*yattaqi*) in this way against invectives will only be reviled".

It is interesting to note that the first half of the verse forms a kind of structural definition of the concept of *ittaqa*. Exactly the same thought is expressed in the following hemistich much more tersely:

وَكُلُّ كَرِيمٍ يَتَّقِي النَّمَّ بِالْعَرَى *

"Every man of a noble nature guards himself against blame with hospitality".¹⁸ That is to say, he puts between himself, i.e. his personal honor, and the possible blame by others his act of spending his wealth in limitless hospitality.

We may rightly regard these cases in which the conceptual structure under discussion is applied to the moral sphere as an intermediate stage between the purely material *ittiqa'* and the purely spiritual, religious *ittiqa'*.

The Hanifitic conception, to which belongs the Koranic thought, goes a step further and completely spiritualizes this conceptual structure. And yet the formal structure itself does not change. Here the possible harm (B) is no

17) *Mu'allaqah* Zuhayr, v. 51.

18) 'Amr b. al-Ahtam, *al-Hamâsab*, DCCXIII, v. 4.

longer an ordinary physical danger, but an eschatological danger, i.e., the severe merciless punishment by God Himself to be inflicted upon those who refuse to surrender and to believe. In this context *ittaqa* means that one guards oneself against the imminent danger of Divine chastisement by putting between it and one's own soul a protective shield of pious obedience and belief. This interpretation is confirmed by the view taken by the authors of *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, according to which the verb *ittaqa* means "That you guard yourself against the 'iqâb (Divine chastisement) by putting between it and yourself the *turs* (shield) of 'ibâdah (worship—lit. 'abd-ness)".

This basic structure is apparent in verses like the following:

فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

"Beware of the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones (i.e. idols), the Fire prepared for the Kâfirs".¹⁹

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمَ لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا

"Beware of a day when no soul shall take another's place"²⁰

Psychologically, this is a particular kind of "fear" (*khawf*)—an eschatological fear, as is shown by some verses, such as:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِمَنْ خَافَ عَذَابَ الْآخِرَةِ

"Surely therein is a sign for him who fears (*khâfa*) the chastisement in the Hereafter".²¹

قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

"Say: Surely I fear (*akhâfu*), if I should disobey the command of my Lord, the chastisement of a dreadful day".²²

The next verse is particularly important in this respect in that it shows the intimate semantic relationship that exists between the psychology of fear and *taqwâ*.

لَهُمْ مِنْ قَوْعِهِمْ ظِلَلٌ مِنَ النَّارِ وَمِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ ذَلِكَ يُخَوِّفُ اللَّهُ بِهِ عِبَادَهُ يَا عِبَادِ فَاتَّقُوا

19) II, v. 22/24. The earlier commentators are of the opinion that by "stone" (*ḥijrah*) is meant "black brimstone" in Hell with which the damned will be tormented; cf. al-Ṭabarî, *Jāmi' al-Bayân*, ad. loc.

20) II, v. 45/48.

21) XI, v. 105/103.

22) VI, v. 15.

23) XXXIX, v. 18/16.

"There shall be dark overshadowings of Fire above them, and beneath them too (similar) overshadowings. That is, God frightens (*yukhawwifu*, causative form of *khawf*) therewith His servants: O My servants, therefore fear (*ittaqû*) Me!"

However, in course of time, this intense eschatological coloring becomes lighter and lighter until at last the meaning of *taqwâ* reaches the stage, at which it has no longer any apparent connection with the image of the Day of Judgment and its horrors, and becomes the nearest equivalent of "piety". At this stage, *taqwâ* has little or nothing to do with the concept of "fear" (*khawf*). This is why, in the Koran the word *muttaqî*—the participial form of *ittaqâ*—is often used in the sense of a "pious believer" standing in opposition to *kâfir*.²⁴

The *muttaqî* at this stage is given a definition in the Koran itself, which does not differ substantially from that of *muslim* or *mu'min*. In the Sûrah *al-Baqarah* the *muttaqî* is defined as "a man who believes in the Unseen, performs the prayer regularly, expends of that which God has provided him, who believes in what has been sent down to the Prophet Muhammad and what has been sent down before Muhammad, and has a firm faith in the Hereafter".²⁵

It is very interesting to observe that this is reflected in the non-Koranic literature of the earliest Islam, 'Abdah b. al-Ṭabîb, one of the contemporaries of the Prophet says in a poem:

أَوْصِيَكُمْ بِتَقَى الْإِلَهِ فَإِنَّهُ * يُعْطِي الرِّغَابَ مَنْ بَشَاءَ وَبَسَعُ

"I enjoin upon you the *tuqâ* (= *taqwâ*) of God, for it is He who gives to, and withholds from, whomsoever He likes all things that are valuable and desirable".²⁶

Here, as we see, *taqwâ* has nothing at all to do with eschatology and the fear of punishment. This is clear from the very fact that Divine goodness and favor are mentioned as the reason for which man should have *taqwâ* of God.

III WAD AND WAID

We have seen in the preceding that in the Koran God shows to men two

24) For example, IV, v. 130/131.

25) II, vv. 2-3/3-4.

26) *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyât*, XXVII, v. 7.

either *bashîr* or *nadhîr*, according as the news he conveys is something good for *B* or bad. In the Koranic conception, this is an extremely important point regarding the function of a Prophet. The Koran insists constantly that Muhammad is only a "warner".

وَقُلْ إِنِّي أَنَا النَّذِيرُ الْمُبِينُ

"Say: Verily I am the clear warner (*nadhîr*)".²⁷

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ نَذِيرٌ

"Thou art only a warner (*nadhîr*)".²⁸

His function consists in warning unbelieving people that there will be Judgment followed by a dreadful punishment in the Hereafter. The same is true of the concept of *bashîr*. Only, there seems to be a slight difference between *bashîr* and *nadhîr*. According to the analysis done by ibn al-'Arabî. (author of the book *Aḥkâm al-Qur'ân*),²⁹ *al-bashârah* is not only an information given about something desirable but, the *bashîr* should always be the first person to convey the good news, *awwalu mukhbirin bi-l-maḥbûbi*, while *al-nadhârah* is an information given about something unpleasant and anybody who imparts this information is *nadhîr*, the concept does not contain the condition of the informant being the first person to do it.

The following verse of 'Antarah³⁰ is interesting in that it presents the most important of the related concepts gathered in one place.

وَكَمْ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ قَدْ أَتَانَا مُحَذِّرًا * فَكَانَ رَسُولًا فِي السُّورِ مَبْشِرًا

What the poet wants to emphasize is that the future is essentially unpredictable so that it is absolute folly to be worried about what is yet to come. "How many times", he says "has a warner who has come to bid us be on our guard against something bad turned out ultimately to be a messenger of delightful things bringing a good news".

It goes without saying that the second pair is most intimately related to the first pair and is based upon it. The following verse³¹ brings out this connection very well.

وَعَظِيمُ الْمَلِكِ قَدْ أَوْعَدَنِي * وَأَتَتْنِي دُونَهُ مِنْهُ النَّذِيرُ

27) XV, v. 89.

28) XI, v. 15/12.

29) Cairo, 1957, Vol. I, p. 15.

30) *Dîwân*, p. 85, v. 5.

31) The poet is al-Marrâr b. Munqidh, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyât*, XVI, v. 43.

"Very often a mighty Lord of a kingdom has threatened (*aw'ada*) me, and warnings from him have reached me before he came to me himself". We may notice that in the verse that follows this immediately (44), the poet describes this mighty king as choking with rage just as the eyes of a leopard in anger are kindled with fire, which shows the situation very clearly.

As regards the contrast between *wa'ada* and *aw'ada*, we must remark that in Jahiliyyah, the distinction is sometimes strictly made, sometimes not.

وَأَنِّي إِنِ أَوْعَدْتُهُ أَوْ وَعَدْتُهُ * لَأَخْلِفُ إِعَادِي وَأُنَجِّزُ مَوْعِدِي

"My nature is such that when I have threatened (*aw'ada*) him or promised (*wa'ada*) him something good, I am inclined to leave unfulfilled my threat (*ʿād=wa'id*), but bring to pass my promise (*marw'id=wa'd*)".³²

In this verse which has been attributed also to Tarafah, the most definite distinction is made between the two, while in other places the two verbs are often used indiscriminately. Likewise, in the Koran, the distinction is rather loose. Just to give one example:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْكُفَّارَ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ

"Allāh has promised (*wa'ada*) the hypocrites, men and women, and the disbelievers the Fire of Hell".³³

And the Kāfirs of Mecca say sarcastically to the Muslims in reference to the Day of Judgment:

مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

"When will this promise (*wa'd*, meaning *wa'id*) come true, if what you say is true?"³⁴

As is well known, this distinction develops into an exceedingly important theological problem in early Islam, as is witnessed by the rise of a sect in the Mu'tazilah school of theology known under the name of *ahl al-wa'id* "People of Threat" or *al-Wa'idīyyah* headed by al-Jubbā'i. Semantically, this is a very interesting problem, but here we must leave the subject untouched, because a discussion of problems of this sort would take us far beyond the scope of the present study.

32) 'Amir b. al-Ṭufayl, *Dirwān*, Beirut, 1959, XVII, v. 2.

33) IX, v. 69/68.

34) According to al-Farrā' the word *wa'd* may be used in two senses: wide and narrow. When used in the wide sense it makes no distinction between "good" and "bad" (*wa'ad-tu-bu khayran* "I promised him something good" and *wa'ad-tu-bu sharran* "I promised him something bad"). In the narrower sense, it is only applied to *khayr*, leaving the "promise of bad things (i.e. threatening)" to *wa'id*, cf. Ibn Qutaybah: *Adab al-Kātib*, Cairo, 1958, pp. 271-272.

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